

Panama Multi Country Office

Monthly Operational Update

Regional context

Forcibly displaced populations found in the countries under MCO Panama continue to present increased protection risks, mainly due to restricted access to basic needs and services, such as food, dignified housing, livelihoods, health services, access to justice, and education. Furthermore, detentions and deportations continue to take place in several countries, where there is concern over the occasional difficult access to asylum or other protection procedures.

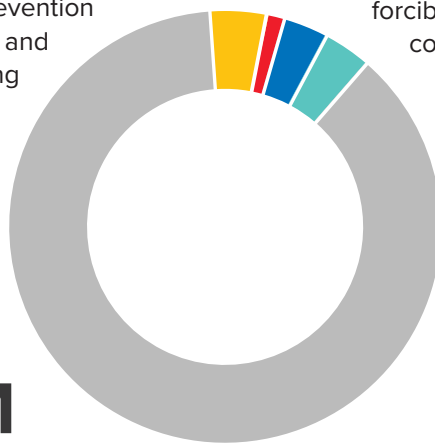
Vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 continue to take place across all countries and currently tend to focus on reaching all members of communities, including refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Such is the case in Curaçao, where authorities implemented free transportation to vaccination sites, additional walk-in options, as well as neighbourhood outreach activities to encourage vaccination. Additionally, UNHCR supports refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern by providing translation when needed.

The efforts and advancement of vaccinations have allowed some governments to relax measures and allow for re-opening of economic and social sectors. Nonetheless, epicentres of infection still emerge, as in the case of Panama, in the Chiriquí province, neighbouring Costa Rica, as well as in Cuba, which may prompt further prevention actions. On a similar note, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago are also facing their third wave of COVID-19, with high hospital occupancy rate.



Economic reactivation and access to livelihoods remain a concern for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities in the countries under MCO Panama. In this sense, in Suriname a deal with the International Monetary Fund will help in taking the next steps towards stabilizing the economy and balance outstanding payments. Meanwhile, in Panama, 35% of respondents in the latest [Gallup survey](#) identify the unemployment rate as their main concern, followed by the cost of the basic food basket (15%).

MCO Panama requires USD48.7million to further develop assistance programmes and facilitate access to livelihoods, food, housing, documentation, and health services for refugees, asylum seekers and others of concern. UNHCR also continues to strengthen capacity within the local communities and professional guilds, with aims at divulging its mission and work in the subregion, alongside the situation faced by forcibly displaced populations from Venezuela and countries across Central America.



12% funded

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

Regional funding overview

as of 1 June 2021

48.7M

financial requirements for the Panama MCO in 2021 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Panama, Belize, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guyana, Aruba, Curaçao, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname.**

For further details consult reporting.unhcr.org

Update on country activities

COORDINATION WITH LOCAL & NATIONAL GOVERNMENT/ STRENGTHENING CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

• In **Guyana**, UNHCR and the Guyana General Register Office (GRO) engaged in dialogue on the potential areas of collaboration for the benefit of the Venezuelan population. As a result, UNHCR pledged to support the GRO by providing in person translation services once a month in their offices, and further assisting with document translations.

• In **Panama**, 70 National Migration Service officials participated in a capacity-building session on international protection. The training was delivered by members of the Protection Working Group, including UNHCR, partners and ONPAR.

• In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR in partnership with the Police Academy and partner Living Water Community, trained 81 police officers on refugee protection principles and working with vulnerable communities.

• In **Aruba**, UNHCR delivered an online workshop on housing rights for 5 partners. Similar sessions were held on alimony requests, paternity determination, and monetary claims.

• In **Curaçao**, UNHCR facilitated an online workshop to validate the GBV referral pathway, with 24 participants from government, national institutions, R4V partners and civil society organizations. Furthermore, as a means of shining a light on stories of refugees and migrants from Venezuela living in an irregular status amid the pandemic in Curaçao, UNHCR launched the Hidden Voices initiative, produced by the Curaçaoan photographer Berber van Beek.

• In **Guyana**, UNHCR provided counselling and orientation to 752 refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern on documentation and health services, and accompanied 223 individuals to government services, including to provide interpretation during vaccinations. During a joint mission together with Diseases Control Supervisor and Immigration officials, 26 people residing in the indigenous communities of Port Kaituma and Mabaruma (region 1) were tested for COVID-19 and received their stay permits. Furthermore, UNHCR provided information on sexual and reproductive health, gender and gender equality to 38 women, and 50 persons received information on available service providers and referral pathways.

• In **Panama**, UNHCR and Fundación Iguales held an Instagram Live to inform on the displacement in Central

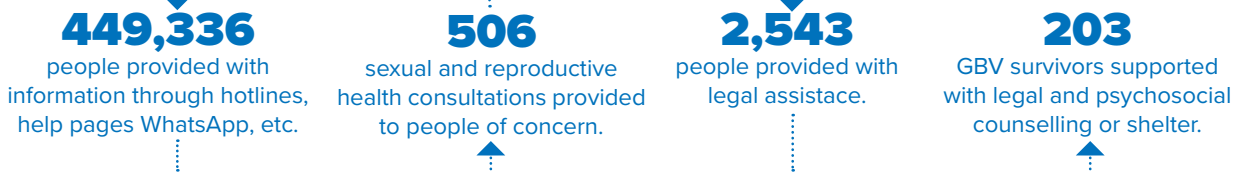
America and to promote the “Doy La Cara” campaign. More than 100 persons viewed and interacted during the session. Furthermore, UNHCR delivered a session to 71 university students on the impact of COVID-19 on the human rights and asylum seekers during a forum organized by students from the University of Panama. Additionally, UNHCR delivered an informative session to 20 high school students on refugees and forced displacement, the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Panama, and the “Doy La Cara” Campaign.

• In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR delivered a virtual session on International Protection and Contemporary Forced Migration Issues to the participants of the Youth Speak Up Programme, where discussions included xenophobia and ways to combat it amongst young people, encourage advocacy, and promote volunteerism to support local vulnerable groups.

PROTECTION (INCLUDING CBP & SGBV)



Key protection results January to May 2021



CHILD PROTECTION

• In **Aruba**, UNHCR and HIAS launched the Equality in Diversity Campaign to be implemented in schools by a local community-based organization. The campaign includes child-friendly materials and facilitating discussions with different age groups on diversity and equality.

• In **Belize**, UNHCR provided homework assistance to 21 refugee and asylum seekers children and adolescents.

• In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR delivered 400 tablets through two partners – Living Water Community (LWC) and the Catholic Education Board of Management (CEBM) – to facilitate access to online education for Equal Place (EP) and CEBM school students.

- In **Guyana**, the R4V Subregional Platform in conjunction with the Guyana Working Group conducted PSEA training for 17 staff members.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR, IOM and UN-Habitat presented the European Union supported project “Ciudades Incluyentes, Comunidades Solidarias” to various Panamanian authorities. The project seeks to strengthen the capacity of local

institutions to respond to the integration of refugees and migrants in the country.

- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR presented a module on International Protection of Refugees during a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Workshop organized and hosted by IOM at the TT Police Academy.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION



REINFORCING SHELTERS & SAFE SPACE NETWORKS

- In **Guyana**, UNHCR provided information on access to shelter to 11 families living in a spontaneous government shelter known as the Green House, in region 1. Furthermore, during a mission to Eteringbang, at the border with Venezuela, UNHCR visited Plastic City, a settlement where approximately 100 Venezuelans reside. Specific needs related to WASH and shelter were identified and a response will be implemented shortly.



- In **Aruba**, UNHCR provided counselling and information to 44 individuals on legal inquiries, health, humanitarian assistance, registration, and resettlement, while 283 visits were recorded to UNHCR’s Help Page.
- In **Belize**, through partners, UNHCR assisted 84 cases with food, rent, medicinal assistance, psychosocial support, and legal counselling.

- In **Cuba**, UNHCR delivered CBI to 131 refugees and other people of concern for basic needs coverage, in response to the continuous difficulties in access to food and medicine.

DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR assisted 12 individuals with multipurpose CBI, registration, legal inquiries and counselling, and humanitarian assistance.



Key assistance & CBI results January to May 2021

2,455

people receiving food assistance (in-kind).

1,408

people benefitting from improved hygiene conditions (including through distribution of hygiene kits, construction of latrines).

1,011

people supported with shelter, settlement or temporary collective accommodation solutions.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS & LIVELIHOODS



- In **Aruba**, UNHCR organized an online mini workshop for three partners in Aruba and Curaçao on filing monetary claims, including for withheld salaries for persons engaged in informal jobs. Moreover, the research team from the University of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, arrived in the country to carry out a labour market assessment commissioned by UNHCR through HIAS.
- In **Belize**, 119 asylum seekers and refugees in the Toledo district received livelihoods training on furniture/carpentry

classes, cosmetology courses, welding, art, yoga classes, bread baking session. Moreover, UNHCR and the Resident Coordinator issued a statement calling for the inclusion of refugee women in the country’s women empowerment activities.

- In **Panama**, UNHCR, ManpowerGroup, and HIAS launched the first generation of 2021 of the Talent without Borders (Talento sin Fronteras), where 32 participants (including refugees, asylum seekers, and members of the host community) received the first online workshop on job-seeking and employability skills.

Key solutions & livelihoods results January to May 2021

1,519

children and adolescents provided with education support (materials, enrollment support, etc).

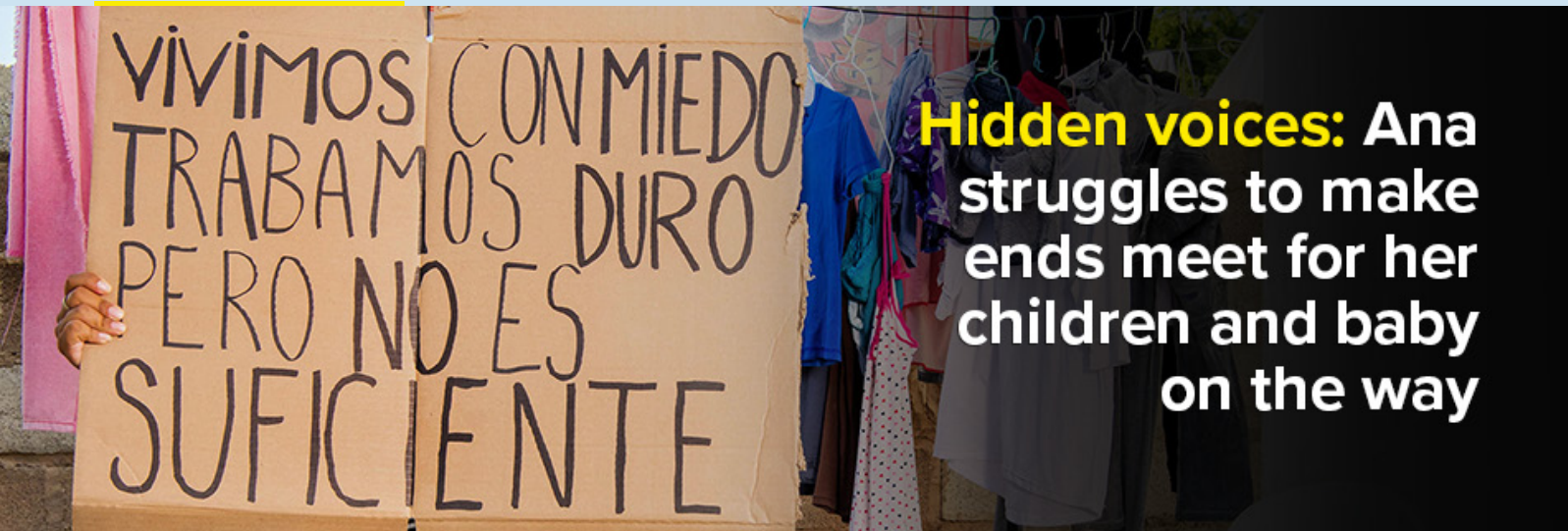
874

people provided with livelihoods training (employed or self-employed).

620

Number of PoC receiving cash grants or vouchers (including MPG, cash for livelihoods, shelter, health, or other sectoral grants).

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Hidden voices: Ana struggles to make ends meet for her children and baby on the way

Ana in her humble new home in Curaçao. Credit: Protect creator/photographer: Berber van Beek | Studiorootz- Photography Interview & Text: Yolanda Wiel & Berber van Beek

During the lockdown, my husband could not work. We didn't have any income so we couldn't pay the rent, but the owner of these apartments didn't care at all. He kicked us out during the lockdown. It was horrible. I was 8 months pregnant, but he cut the water and even threatened us. We had nowhere else to go and we were in the middle of the lockdown. No one was allowed outside.

Being [in an irregular status] and pregnant is extra challenging. I'm home all day and every single morning when my husband leaves for work, I worry if he will come home at night or if he's going to get caught and deported. It's very stressful. We're not insured, and we have to sign a payment agreement to give birth. A natural birth costs Nafl. 9.000,- and a caesarean costs Nafl. 13.500,-. The [UNHCR supported] Salú Pa Tur clinic helps us with check-ups, but they are not able to cost the birth. I feel unsure about the future. I try to only think of today. I have to keep going and stay positive.

We also have food packages. I can make meals with them, but we have several other monthly costs we have to pay. Nafl. 650,- rent and that doesn't include water or electricity. My husband has just started working again, thankfully. He wants to make extra now, to pay the due rent. He keeps coming over to remind us that rent is due all the time. But we have still met people who have been kind to us here in the island, people who have given us their support and solidarity.

I don't want people to pity me, because I'm not waiting on others to come and save me. I'm here to take care of myself and my family.



Check out the full story in [Papiamento](#) as well

We thank the contributions of our donors

updated to 1 June 2021

UNHCR is grateful for the generous and timely support provided by donors to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and in Belize, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua and Southern Caribbean countries, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.



Private donors, including Private Donors Spain, Australia and Republic of Korea.

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