

## 2021 Planning summary

29/12/2020

### Operation: Panama Multi-Country Office



*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

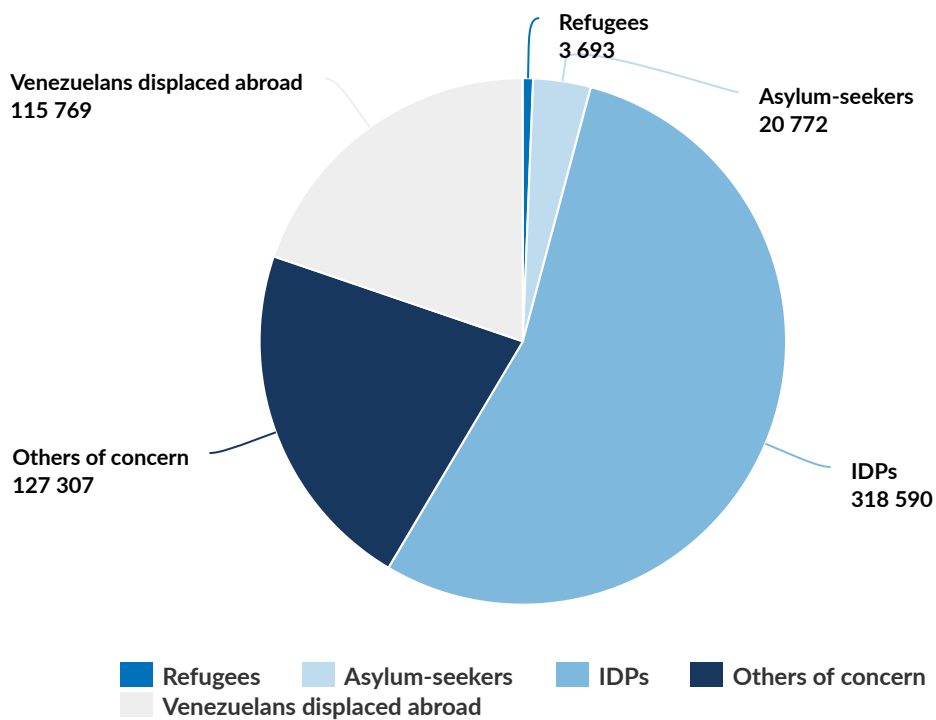
# People of Concern

INCREASE IN  
**21%** 2019

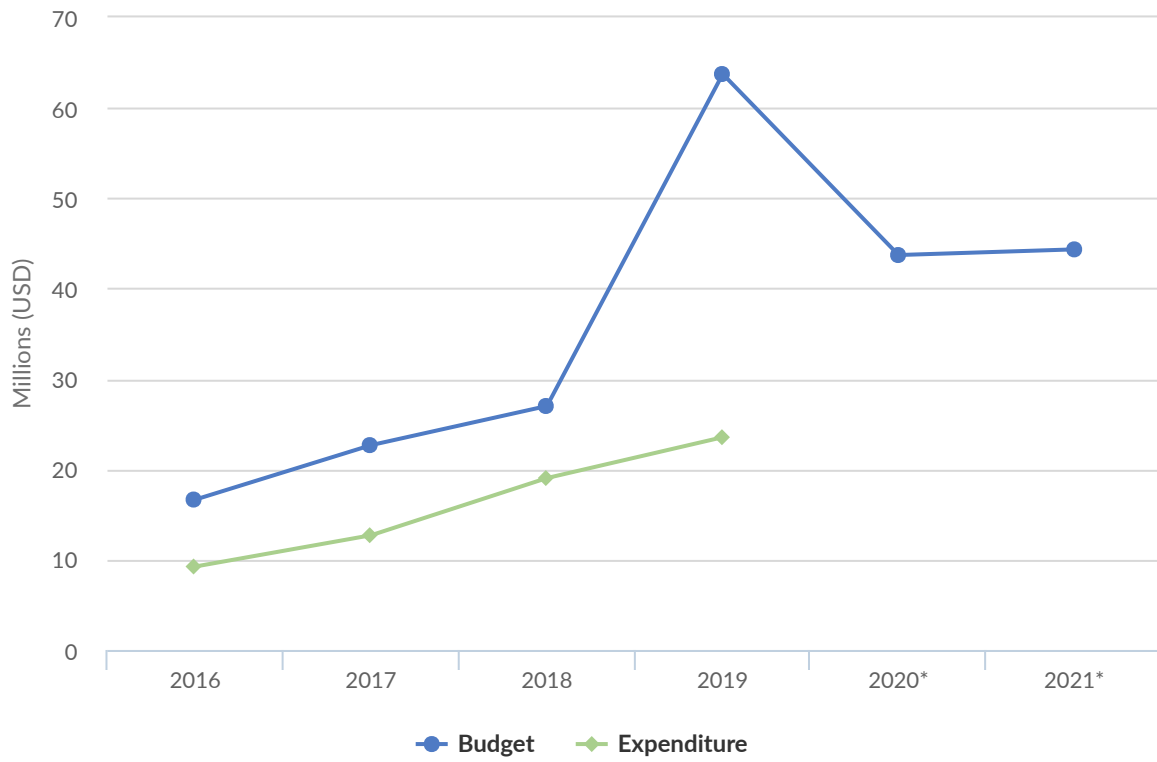
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2019	586,131
2018	484,586
2017	375,326

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# Budgets and Expenditure for Panama Multi-Country Office



## Operational environment

With no expected improvement in the human rights and socioeconomic situation in Venezuela, Venezuelans will continue to flee to the southern Caribbean countries. These countries are expected to host an estimated 100,000 people of concern to UNHCR by the end of 2021, representing a 20% increase since 2020.

Due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions, refugees and migrants have increasingly resorted to irregular routes, exposing themselves to greater risks at sea, smuggling and human trafficking. As a result, there is high probability that the cases of refoulement will rise in 2021.

Refugees and migrants are likely to face greater challenges in regularizing their stay in receiving countries and obtaining documentation, along with existing barriers in accessing basic services, shelter and livelihoods. Disproportionally affected by loss of income, as a result of the pandemic, and excluded from social support systems, refugees and migrants will face a deterioration in their living conditions and will be further exposed to risks such as sexual and labour exploitation, gender-based violence and xenophobia.

Panama will also be impacted by the Venezuela situation, with over 127,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants expected to arrive in 2021, most of whom will be unable to access the asylum system because of the restricted refugee definition in force. These new arrivals will remain dependent on the informal economy, which has been heavily impacted by the pandemic.

The sociopolitical crisis in Nicaragua will continue to result in forced displacement in 2021, with Panama hosting the most Nicaraguan asylum-seekers - after Costa Rica - (more than 8,000 asylum-seekers since April 2018). Within Nicaragua, UNHCR will maintain its small presence, with a focus on bringing humanitarian assistance to the 900 asylum-seekers and refugees that arrived mainly before the April 2018 events. This number is not expected to increase taking into consideration the humanitarian and sociopolitical situation in the country.

In Cuba, UNHCR will conduct mandatory refugee status determination for people with international protection needs. In addition, the Office will support them in their search for alternatives to resettlement, since the national authorities do not have a legal basis to do so and does not allow for local integration alternatives.

While displacement in the North of Central America is expected to increase as the internal economic and security conditions worsen, Belize and Panama will face the arrival of displaced people, along with others in mixed movements. Within the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), UNHCR will support governments' efforts to enhance the local integration of people of concern from the North of Central America, Colombia, Nicaragua and Venezuela; promote the inclusion of refugees in public policies; and engage with development actors to promote durable solutions.

## Key priorities

In 2021, UNHCR in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago will focus on:

- Supporting States in the southern Caribbean and Central America, to ensure that Venezuelans, Nicaraguans and other populations of concern have access to asylum and/or alternative legal pathways without fear of being deported, in line with the objectives of the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan and MIRPS.
- Strengthening access to social protection services and to socioeconomic rights and enhancing its focus on the prevention and response to gender-based violence and human trafficking.
- Strengthening resettlement and relocation options as part of comprehensive durable solutions, both as a protection tool for most vulnerable refugees and as a strategic one to improve refugee policies at the

national levels.

- Promoting local integration and livelihood alternatives to strengthen income generating activities as well as community-based interventions supporting both refugee and host communities.
  - Enhancing peaceful coexistence through community-based initiatives and communication campaigns, targeting both refugee and host communities.
  - Strengthening humanitarian and coordinated inter-agency interventions in response to mixed movements and individuals highly affected by the pandemic.
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