

# Belize



January - March 2024

## Key Figures



**4,130**

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Belize, mainly from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.



**147**

Refugees and asylum-seekers received legal assistance and counselling on the Amnesty exercise, documentation and appeals.



**46**

Refugees and asylum-seekers received cash-based assistance to cover basic needs.

## Context

Belize assumed the **2024 Pro-Tempore Presidency** of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and reactivated its MIRPS National Technical Team (NTT). Through the NTT, the country aims to strengthen the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures and prevent statelessness through access to timely birth registration.

In February, the Government began issuing **permanent residency cards** under the Amnesty Programme to asylum-seekers who applied. So far, over 40 asylum-seekers have received their IDs.

The House of Representatives passed an amendment to the **education policy**, raising the minimum age for children to remain in school from 14 to 16. The initiative seeks to decrease the nation's dropout rate and increase primary and high school enrollment. The measure is extensive to refugees and asylum-seekers who will receive more support from the government to remain in school.

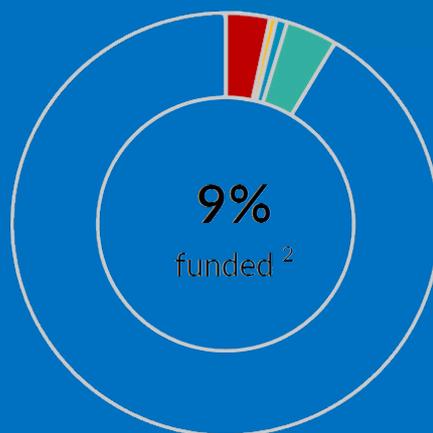
**Municipal elections** were held in March in all six districts of Belize. The People's United Party, the current Government party retained most of the municipalities, including Belmopan.

The Government declared a **state of emergency** in the south side of Belize City, Roaring Creek, and Camalote due to a spate of murders.

"I have felt such immense peace in Belize, and I am grateful to the country for opening its doors to me and my family when we needed it most." – The first asylum-seeker applicant to receive her permanent residency card through the Amnesty exercise.



## Regional funding Overview as of 31 March 2024



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

**\$56.1 million<sup>1</sup>**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2024

<sup>1</sup> Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2024 including requirements for the operations and activities in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded is indicative.

## UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR collaborates with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Belize. A partnership with the Refugees Department helps channel support and continues strengthening the asylum system in the country. Additionally, UNHCR works in partnership with Help for Progress (HfP), HUMANA People to People Belize (HUMANA), and the Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB).



**Coordination with local authorities** | UNHCR and the Refugees Department are conducting a joint documentation campaign in five asylum-seeking host communities in Belize. The initiative seeks to identify people who have yet to apply for asylum. UNHCR and HRCB liaised with Belize Central Prison to implement monthly protection screenings to identify individuals with international protection needs.



**Protection** | In the MIRPS framework, UNHCR trained eight partner staff on civil society dialogue mechanisms. The Agency led a media training for ten reporters, journalists, and communication officials. During the workshop, the Refugees Department presented the asylum process and Belize's MIRPS commitments. UNHCR led a two-day Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) training with 35 staff of HUMANA. UNHCR conducted a cross-border mission on the Guatemalan border and met with migration officials to discuss the main challenges asylum-seekers in this area face and exchange good practices.



**Education** | UNHCR, through Help for Progress (HfP), donated over USD\$10,000 in materials and labor costs to construct a new roof for a primary school in Teakettle Village. The school has 310 students, including asylum-seekers and locals. The school held a thank you ceremony for the assistance, as this infrastructure could also be used as shelter during hurricane season.



**Local Integration** | On International Women's Day, UNHCR and the refugee-led organization I Hope held a training for 13 refugee and asylum-seeking women focused on women's health and economic inclusion.



### MIRPS National Technical Team Reactivation

UNHCR organized a workshop for 17 Government officials on re-establishing the NTT and further steps to address the country's MIRPS commitments. Officials from the Refugees Department, the Department of Immigration, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among others, participated.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Australia | Belgium | CERF | Denmark | European Union | Ireland | Republic of Korea | The Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |

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# UNHCR's presence in Belize

