Mixed Movements Darien and Chiriquí

DECEMBER 2024

Key Figures

302,203
People crossed the Darien jungle as of December 2024.

4,849
People in December.

55 per cent
Of those interviewed in 2024 by UNHCR and UNICEF left their country due to threats, attacks or generalized violence.

Context

The year 2024 marked the first significant decrease in irregular entries through the Darien jungle since 2020. A total of 302,203 people crossed, registering a 42 per cent decrease compared to last year's figures. Panama's new border measures, adverse weather, and socio-political regional dynamics contributed to this reduction.

Despite the decrease, many forcibly displaced people fell victim to violence, robbery, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and need reliable information on protection mechanisms and services. UNHCR and UNICEF's latest protection monitoring report, shows that 42 per cent of those interviewed were victims of theft, scams, or fraud during their journey through the jungle, and 14 per cent were targets of threats, intimidation, and attacks. Moreover, in 2024, 55 per cent left their country due to threats, attacks or generalized violence, and 31 per cent indicated that the need for protection and safety drove their choice of destination country.

Under the Panama-US Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to discourage irregular crossings, officials have conducted 39 deportation flights, repatriating over 1,700 people who entered through Darien, including Colombians, Ecuadorians, Indians and Vietnamese. President Mulino emphasized the difficulties in repatriating Venezuelan nationals due to the suspension of commercial flights between Panama and this country.

UNHCR's response

UNHCR supports the Government's response at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs in its Spanish acronym) and to host communities in Darien and Chiriquí. With the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR offers legal support to people with international protection needs and refers individuals requiring specialized assistance to relevant institutions. UNHCR and NRC also provide information on the asylum system in Panama and assist with refugee status applications. Through HIAS, UNHCR provides Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and provides people in transit with information on the risks of the route through informative sessions. Through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), UNHCR delivers primary health care to refugees and migrants at the Government's ETRMs.

To support the Government's humanitarian response, UNHCR continuously trains border and administrative officials on refugee protection and statelessness prevention. For more information on UNHCR's work in Panama, click here.

Key achievements

575
people informed about the risks of the journey

615
people received counselling and information on asylum

251
people assisted with primary health care

52
Refugees supported to cover the cost of renewing their IDs

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

PANAMA MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE
MIXED MOVEMENTS - DARIEN AND CHIRIQUI

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UNHCR's initiatives in Darien and Chiriquí

To commemorate World AIDS Day, UNHCR and AID for AIDS organized a mural painting. The event aimed to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention and promote non-discrimination among approximately 1,000 individuals staying in the ETRM Lajas Blancas over several days.

UNHCR participated in an inter-institutional fair organized by HIAS in the Villa Caleta community, Emberaa-Wounan territory, as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The event also involved the Ombudsperson's Office, the Red Cross, UN Women, and the Ministry of Women.

As part of a Humanitarian Border Security Unit (USFROH) event, UNHCR facilitated a training session for 200 National Border Service (SENAFRONT) officials in Darien. The session focused on identifying individuals with international protection needs and referring them to the national asylum system.

In Yaviza, a host community in Darien, UNHCR and NRC conducted a documentation mission benefiting 52 refugees. The Agency provided cash-based assistance to help them cover the costs of renewing their refugee IDs, permanent residency, passports, and general identification.

Other achievements

UNHCR's Help Page registered 299,481 visits in December. For more information on international protection and asylum, please contact us by scanning our QR.

UNHCR with UNICEF, interviewed 132 refugees and migrants during its monthly monitoring exercise in Darien and Chiriquí.

UNHCR, through HIAS, assisted 75 people with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle.

In December, UNHCR's Confía en el Tucán campaign reached 746,984 visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 186,395 engagements.

UNHCR Multi-Country Office in Panama thanks the contributions from our donors in 2024

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