UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

BORDER REPORT
CHIRIQUI-DARIEN

APR-JUN 2025

200
people received legal counselling and information on asylum and protection services.

430
people in border areas received core relief items, including sleeping mats, kitchen sets, and mosquito nets.

140
government officials trained in international protection and UNHCR's mandate.

Situation

By the end of June, 2,927 people had **entered** Panama through the Darien jungle, with only 96 individuals recorded during the year's second quarter.

This marks a 99 per cent decrease compared to **last year**, reflecting the impact of regional dynamics, Panama's stricter border measures, and the departure of over 50 repatriation **flights** under the joint US Memorandum of Understanding. In this context, the Government announced the closure of **Lajas Blancas' Temporary Reception Centre**, previously the main border facility for those arriving through the jungle in recent years.

In contrast, a growing number of people continue to attempt to return south as part of 'reverse flows', entering through the western border and later navigating dangerous sea routes from Colón communities and the Guna Yala territories toward Colombia. In June, in coordination with Costa Rican authorities, the National Aeronaval Service **(SENAN)** facilitated the movement of 109 people to La Miel, near the Colombian border, at a symbolic cost. Panamanian officials had recorded nearly **12,000** people this year as part of this trend, mainly from Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Nepal, Cameroon, and Iran.

In June, Panama and the US renewed their bilateral migration **agreement**, adding USD 7 million to support deportation operations and management of irregular crossings. By the end of that month, Panama had deported or expelled nearly 2,350 individuals under this framework.

Highlights

- As UNHCR gradually decreases its field presence in Darien, the agency is donating core relief items, including kitchen sets, mosquito nets, chairs, and tables, to Indigenous communities in the province and the Embera-Wounaan Comarca. In this quarter, some 400 core relief items have been distributed.
- In Chiriquí, UNHCR met with the Mayor of Bugaba to confirm the donation of land to establish a new Ombudsperson's office, aimed at strengthening local protection mechanisms and ensuring continuity of support for refugees and asylum-seekers, as UNHCR gradually reduces its presence in the region.
- UNHCR conducted field visits to Bajo Chiquito's community to monitor the construction of the community nursery under the Waste Management Innovation project. During the visit, UNHCR donated mosquito nets and equipment to the local community and met with the community delegates and the local leader (Noko) to share information about the next steps for the nursery.
- To commemorate World Refugee Day in Chiriqui, UNHCR and NRC held a community event at the Medalla Milagrosa shelter. The initiative fostered dialogue, bringing together some 50 participants, including shelter residents, refugees, asylum-seekers, and representatives from the Ministry of Women, the National Migration Service (SNM), and the Ombudsman's Office.
- UNHCR also conducted a training session at the Barú Regional University Center in Puerto Armuelles, raising awareness among 65 attendees on international protection principles.

Operational overview

UNHCR assists refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, and other vulnerable groups to ensure they access protection mechanisms, basic rights, and life-saving services in Panama. The Agency supports the Government's humanitarian response in border areas and local communities hosting refugees and asylum seekers, and provides technical assistance to the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR).

In collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR provides information on the asylum system, offers legal support to people with international protection needs, refers those requiring specialized assistance to relevant institutions, and assists asylum-seekers with obtaining refugee status. Together with HIAS, UNHCR delivers mental health and psychosocial support services, information on protection rights, and access to essential services. UNHCR provides primary health care through the Panamanian Red Cross at border points. The Agency works with Emberá-Wounaán host communities, supporting the development of shelter spaces and infrastructure, and facilitating integration programmes for community members, asylum-seekers, and refugees.

For World Refugee Day, UNHCR held a community fair in Vista Alegre, Darién, offering legal guidance to 20 families and information on international protection to refugees and host community members. Around 250 people attended, enjoying recreational activities that fostered social cohesion. /©UNHCR

In Chiriquí, UNHCR trained over 60 SNM and police officials on identifying asylum-seekers and stateless persons, as part of NRC's workshop on international protection and human rights. The training supports stronger institutional capacity in border areas. /©UNHCR

Life saving information

Access to life-saving information is crucial for forcibly displaced people. Confía en el Tucán and the UNHCR HELP Page counter misinformation, by sharing accurate updates on the Darien dangers, how to access essential services, and international protection mechanisms in Panama.

UNHCR's Help Page registered 33,011 visits until June 2025.

UNHCR's Confía en el Tucán campaign reached 124,581 visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 4,744 engagements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE

UNHCR's Multi-Country Office in Panama is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding.

We thank the contributions of our private donors in Australia, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, and Spain.

FOR MORE UPDATES
VISIT THE DATA PORTAL
BY CLICKING HERE

FOLLOW US ON OUR
SOCIAL MEDIA
BY CLICKING HERE

For more information
Margarida Loureiro, Deputy Representative at
loureiro@unhcr.org
Benedetta Pignatti, External Relations Officer at
pignattb@unhcr.org

For media interviews:
panpamedia@unhcr.org