

Panama

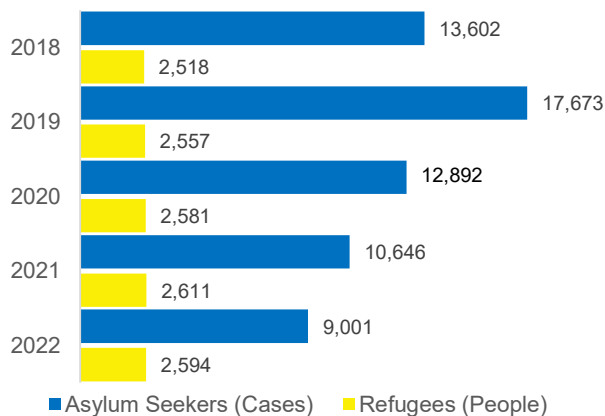
November – December 2022

Panama is home to some **13,000 refugees and asylum seekers**. As of December 2022, approximately **146,400 displaced Venezuelans** were living in the country¹.

In 2022, a total of **248,284** people of over 30 nationalities crossed through the perilous Darien jungle², seeking protection and better life opportunities.

In 2022, UNHCR assisted more than **3,500** asylum seekers and refugees with **multi-purpose cash or vouchers** to cover their basic and urgent needs.

People UNHCR protects



*ONPAR, October 2022

CONTEXT

Refugees and asylum seekers in Panama are mainly from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. These people face challenges with local integration, mainly due to limited income-generating opportunities.

During the month of November, after the United States announced a **new migratory policy for Venezuelans**³, the number of irregular crossings through Darien shifted substantially, with a reduction of almost three-quarters of the crossings (16,632), compared to the numbers registered in the previous month (59,773).

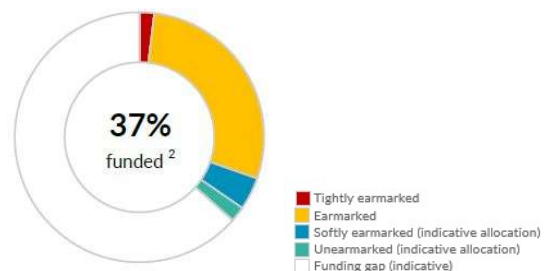
In December, irregular crossings rose again, with a total of 20,297 people who entered in that month alone. Overall, nearly 250,000 people of more than 30 nationalities crossed through Darien in 2022, making it a record year in Panamanian history.

UNHCR leads the protection working group in Darien, coordinating response strategies with local authorities and partners. The agency counts on specialized field staff to support protection services and monitoring exercises at the Temporary Migratory Reception Centres (ETRM) and in host communities.

FUNDING (AS OF 29 DECEMBER 2022)

US\$ 54.3 M

requested for the Panama Multi-Country Office for 2022



1 The financial requirements for the Panama MCO include requirements for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation. **Panama** is part of the Panama Multi-Country Office since 2022 along with Belize, Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Southern Caribbean

2 The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions

Youth Leadership and Mentoring Program: Advocating for the integration of refugees



Since September, UNHCR, HIAS, and Key Communications Group conduct the “*Youth Leadership and Mentoring Program*” for the development of projects focused on the integration of refugees and other vulnerable groups in local communities.

In November, 24 students, 17 from Colegio Brader and seven refugees and asylum seekers, completed this course. During graduation participants showcased projects focused on social media campaigns against xenophobia and discrimination, as well as on the inclusion of forcibly displaced people.

UNHCR Response and Strategy

UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in Panama. Close coordination with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) is maintained to channel support and continue strengthening the asylum system in the country. UNHCR closely liaises with the Ombudsperson's Office, the Electoral Tribunal, and the National Migration Service. UNHCR co-chairs with IOM the UN inter-agency group on human mobility, which coordinates humanitarian support and interventions namely related to the mixed movements in Darien and Chiriquí provinces. UNHCR has established partnership agreements with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH), Panamanian Red Cross, *Fútbol con Corazón* (FCC), and *Fundación Espacio Creativo* (FEC). Furthermore, UNHCR supports the government in implementing its commitments under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS).

Main Activities

Alongside the government, partner organizations, civil society, development actors, and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:



Coordination and Strengthening of Local and National Governments | UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met with Panamanian authorities for the creation of an Interinstitutional Commission for the Implementation of the [Decree on Statelessness](#) and conducted relevant training for some **30 officers** of various institutions, including the National Migration Service, and the Electoral Tribunal.



Protection | UNHCR [Protection Monitoring Exercises](#) in Darien, reached over **200 people**, with several cases referred to partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for legal counselling on the refugee status determination procedure. UNHCR provided [legal assistance to 144 persons](#) with international protection needs to access the asylum system in November and December. To mark the **16 days of activism** against gender-based violence (GBV), UNHCR and partners organized a [family fair](#) with informative stands, inviting the community to write support messages on GBV prevention and refugee inclusion. Together, the Municipality of La Chorrera, partners, refugees, asylum seekers, host community members, and UNHCR painted [three murals](#) to raise awareness of GBV.



Cash-Based Assistance (CBI) | UNHCR through partners provided CBI to **781 persons**, including single-purpose and multi-purpose cash vouchers for food, medicines, livelihoods, rent payments, and/or temporary accommodation during November and December.



Durable Solutions and Livelihoods | UNHCR and the City of Knowledge Foundation launched a the website [Emprendiendo Juntos](#) to enhance the visibility of refugees' small business projects. UNHCR organized a ["Ventajas"](#) workshop for a total of **80 refugees** to encourage them in their pursuit of formal employment. UNHCR through partners assisted over **400 persons** with [livelihoods](#) activities, including access to technical or vocational skills certification, seed capital grants, and training for self-employment. As part of the [Talent Without Border programme](#), UNHCR conducted a virtual event called ["Recruitment without borders"](#) featuring 42 recruiters from 30 companies. UNHCR and partners held an event called ["Christmas Without Borders"](#), where **50 refugees** received their graduation diplomas with a total of **85 people** attending this event.



Local Integration | UNHCR trained **24 adolescents**, members of the Lajas Blancas, Alto Playona, and Rio Sito communities, on leadership in Darien. The exercise focused on enhancing participants' communication skills to advocate for the [inclusion of refugees](#) and [asylum seekers](#) in their communities.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Canada, the European Union, France, Guyana, the United States of America, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. We also thank the fundamental support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Belgium | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | the United Kingdom. Private donors in Australia | Canada | Germany | Italy | Japan | the Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | and the United States

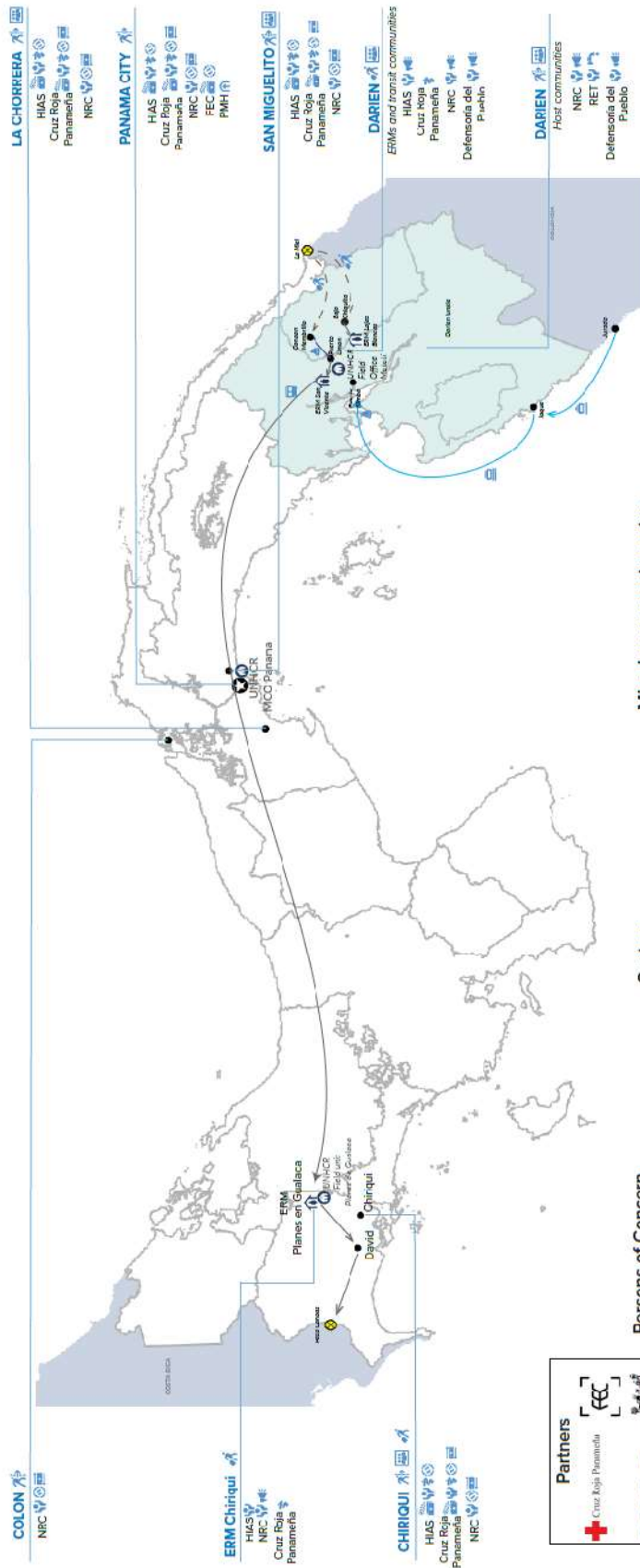
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UNHCR Panama Operational Presence



LA CHORRERA
HIAS
Cruz Roja
Panameña
NRC
PMH (P)

PANAMA CITY
HIAS
Cruz Roja
Panameña
NRC
FEC
PMH (P)

SAN MIGUELITO
HIAS
Cruz Roja
Panameña
NRC

DARIEN
ERMs and transit communities
HIAS
Cruz Roja
Panameña
NRC
Defensoria del Pueblo

DARIEN
Host communities
NRC
RET
Defensoria del Pueblo

COLON
NRC

ERM Chiriqui
HIAS
NRC
Cruz Roja
Panameña

CHIRIQUI
HIAS
Cruz Roja
Panameña
NRC

Partners

- Persons of Concern**
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 - Host Communities
 - Refugees and Migrants in Transit (Mixed Movements)

- Sectors**
- Cash and Voucher
 - Protection (including GBV)
 - Health (including MHFSS)
 - Local integration
 - livelihoods
 - Information sharing
 - WASH
 - Reconstruction
 - Shelter

- Mixed movements routes**
- Border crossing point
 - Migrant Reception Station (ERM)
 - By road (bus)
 - By boat (local)
 - By boat (river)
 - Walking

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