

# DURABLE SOLUTIONS



## Context

Panama is a transit and host country in Central America. According to official figures<sup>1</sup>, Panama hosts approximately 13,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. This population comprises mainly people from Colombia, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

From 2020 to 2022, the declaration of a health emergency due to COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed to prevent its spread, brought severe socio-economic consequences which affected the whole population, including the refugees. Currently, restrictions on the exercise of certain professional activities, difficulty in obtaining formal documentation, and limitations on access to the banking system constitute major challenges to the financial inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama.

UNHCR works with relevant government institutions to strengthen the protection system and the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers. Similarly, UNHCR, civil society, the United Nations system, the private sector, and the academia, promote the socio-economic integration of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as the consolidation of peaceful coexistence with host communities.

## LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMMES

### Talento Sin Fronteras (TSF) (Talent Without Borders)

*Supported by the UNHCR employability programme, implemented through partner HIAS and Manpower Group*

Talento Sin Fronteras is an employability programme for refugees and host communities in Panama City and the Municipality of La Chorrera (Panama Oeste) developed by UNHCR, HIAS, and Manpower Group. Starting in September 2018, TSF aims to enhance the refugees' skills and abilities, allowing them to improve their living conditions through decent work and positively contribute to the country's development. TSF generates strategies to integrate private companies and organizations as allies to strengthen the economic inclusion of refugees in the country.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 184 refugees | **Estimated reach:** 500 people

### Hecho por Refugiados (Made by Refugees)

*Refugee-led entrepreneurship initiative supported by UNHCR and the City of Knowledge Foundation.*

In *Hecho por Refugiados*, refugees and asylum-seekers share their talents and life skills to create and craft items for sale. This activity allows *Hecho por Refugiados* participants to earn additional income to support their families. This programme also sensitizes host communities on forced displacement.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 50 members of refugee families | **Estimated reach:** 120 people



<sup>1</sup> Source: National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) as of October 2022.

\* Scoping estimates based on UNHCR High Frequency Survey (HFS4) data, available at the following link:

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/98108>.

Outreach rates total refugees, applicants for refugee status, and the host population benefiting from the programmes.

## Entrepreneurship programs

*Emprendiendo Juntos: Supported by UNHCR and the City of Knowledge Foundation; School of Entrepreneurship: Supported by UNHCR and implemented through partner HIAS; Educating in entrepreneurship: Supported by UNHCR and implemented through partner Panamanian Red Cross.*

Through the *Emprendiendo Juntos*, *Escuela de Emprendimiento*, and *Educando en emprendimiento* programmes, UNHCR supports the growth of its participants, accompanying the creation and/or improvement of their business strategies and community integration. Through *Emprendiendo Juntos*, UNHCR supported consolidating a board of 50 participating refugees, with eight women entrepreneurs on its board of directors.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 405 refugees | **Estimated reach:** 1,100 people

## Urban gardens programme

*Supported by UNHCR and implemented through partner Panamanian Red Cross.*

UNHCR, through the urban gardens programme, promotes self-employment and family care for refugees and asylum-seekers in urban and rural areas. Mainly developed in La Chorrera, San Miguelito, and Panama City, this programme improves families' quality of life, health, and food through income generation and the sale of surplus organic vegetable production.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 50 members of refugee families | **Estimated reach:** 120 people



## Microcredit program at Microserfin

*Supported by UNHCR and implemented through partner Panamanian Red Cross.*

This programme improves the accessibility of the refugee and asylum-seeker population to the financial and microfinance system in Panama. UNHCR, through the Panamanian Red Cross, seeks to guarantee beneficiaries of the microcredit programme access to banking services that they would not be able to access otherwise, allowing them to create small businesses.

**Direct beneficiaries to date:** 29 | **Total scope to date:** 110

## Digital platforms, continuous learning spaces

*Supported by UNHCR and managed by partners Panamanian Red Cross and HIAS*

UNHCR, through the Panamanian Red Cross and HIAS, seeks to guarantee the means for refugees and asylum-seekers to have virtual training opportunities such as EDX, Coursera, and various university platforms. Through it, UNHCR supports displaced people in obtaining documents that certify their skills and academic growth to access better job opportunities.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 258 refugees | **Estimated reach:** 650 people

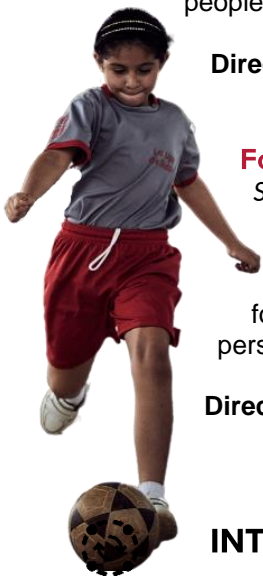
## Football schools, sports education for life

*Supported by UNHCR and managed by partner Futbol con Corazón in partnership with the Ministry of Education*

Through *Futbol con Corazón*, UNHCR supports refugee children and members of host communities in sports pedagogy programmes that seek social integration and peaceful coexistence. These programmes focus on school-age participants creating play spaces through an innovative soccer methodology that develops personal, social, and life skills within educational centers in La Chorrera and Panama City.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 270 refugee children and adolescents and local population | **Estimated reach:** 650 people

## INTEGRATION PROGRAMS



## Youth Leadership and Mentoring Programme

Sponsored by UNHCR with support from The Key Communications Group.

Since September 2022, UNHCR and The Key Communications Group have developed a leadership and mentoring programme for young refugees, asylum-seekers, Panamanian and resident students. The programme promotes the integration of these groups through participatory awareness-raising exercises. To date, 24 students have completed the course and presented their campaigns against xenophobia and discrimination, as well as inclusion projects in host communities. In 2023, UNHCR will continue the programme in different schools.

**Direct beneficiaries to date:** 24 students.

## Community Care and Development Center in La Chorrera

A joint initiative of the Municipality of La Chorrera and UNFPA, supported by UNHCR, government entities, and other agencies of the United Nations System.

UNHCR, together with partner HIAS and other agencies of the United Nations System, supports the Community Care and Development Center of the Municipality of La Chorrera, which serves as an integration space for the care of refugees, migrants, and local women and adolescents in vulnerable conditions. The Center has a programme of essential services and protection for women, girls, and adolescent survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), guaranteeing access to a safe space and specialized legal and health services. In 2022, UNHCR assisted 410 GBV survivors and trained 2,000 people in GBV prevention and response.

## Community promoters

Sponsored by UNHCR and managed by partner HIAS

Through the *Community Promoters* programme, UNHCR and partner HIAS seek to prevent GBV and assist refugee and asylum-seeker women and survivors of GBV with mental health services and psychosocial support. To date, 55 women living in Panama, Panama Oeste, and Chiriquí have volunteered within their respective host communities to be community promoters. Through their volunteer work, community promoters prevent and identify situations of violence, as well as provide psychological first aid and information on basic protection services to GBV survivors.

**Direct beneficiaries:** 55 community promoters | **Estimated reach:** 1,000 women and girls

## Enlaces and Sandbox Programmes

Supported by UNHCR and managed by partner Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC) (Creative Space Foundation)

Through FEC, UNHCR supports refugees, asylum-seekers, and local children and adolescents with integration, innovation, and soft and creative skills development programmes. Through the *Enlaces* Programme, UNHCR supports at-risk children and adolescents in their education and artistic development through classes of expression and contemporary dance. *Sandbox* develops participants' creative and soft skills, integrating technology and performing arts to increase children and adolescents' opportunities for inclusion in creative and cultural industries. These programmes are developed with members of El Chorrillo, Santa Ana, Barraza, and San Felipe neighborhoods; in 2022, some 100 refugee children, adolescents, and asylum seekers benefited from them.

**Direct beneficiaries - Enlaces** 184 and **Sandbox** 249 children and adolescents

UNHCR's Multi-Country Office in Panama thanks the contributions from our direct and unarmarked public and private donors in 2023

