

# Panama Multi-Country Office

## Monthly Operational Update

### Regional Context

In countries under UNHCR Multi-Country Office in Panama, people UNHCR protects continue to be at risk of detention, trafficking, and gender-based violence (GBV).

During the launch of the Refugee and Migrants Response Plan (RMRP), the Aruban Prime Minister highlighted the difficulties **Aruba** faces in addressing the current mixed movements and stated the country has limited capacity to host a large number of refugees and migrants. Nevertheless, the Government is working on its migration policy to enhance labour opportunities for these groups.

Amnesty International, Refugee Work Netherlands, and Human Rights Defense Curaçao (HRDC) wrote to the parliaments of **Curaçao**, Aruba, Saint Maarten and The Netherlands requesting respect for the human rights of refugees and migrants in detention, as well as better reception conditions and shelters for people waiting for a decision of the authorities on their legal status.

In **Belize**, the Cabinet agreed to visa restrictions on Haitians entering Belize and increased entry requirements for Jamaican nationals, despite these being CARICOM member countries. The Prime Minister clarified that the measures for Jamaicans still need implementing.

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State announced that some 10,000 **Cubans** had successfully used the parole program to enter that country regularly. The number of those attempting to enter through dangerous and irregular routes has decreased. Nearly 3,000 Cubans have been returned to their country through 50 bilateral operations as of March.

**Guyana's** Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the 2023 [International Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants and their Host Countries and Communities](#), calling for a concerted response to Venezuelan displacement in the region. The Minister indicated that Guyana continues to offer regularization services to this group and is working on a strategy to include them in the labour market.

The UN Group of Human Rights Experts on **Nicaragua** (GHREN) released a [report](#) on the government's widespread human rights violations. The GHREN highlighted that Nicaragua's actions amount to crimes



against humanity since they are committed against civilians for political reasons.

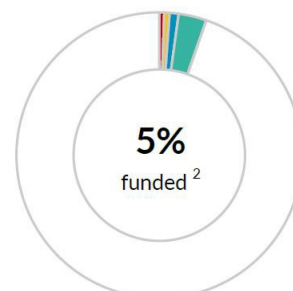
In **Panama**, the President sanctioned the law that creates the Ministry of Women. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour (MITRADEL) updated regulations on six types of work permits, including a humanitarian protection permit targeting refugees, asylum-seekers, or victims of trafficking. Also, MITRADEL is including a work permit for stateless persons for the first time.

In **Suriname**, following February's protests in Paramaribo, on 24 March, hundreds of protesters gathered to demand the President's resignation due to poor administration and the government's decision to eliminate national subsidies.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, after the release of the [US 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices](#), attorneys are calling on the Government to adopt international standards to address alleged human rights violations towards refugees and migrants in the islands.

**MCO Panama requires USD 55.4M to continue assisting and securing solutions** in the subregion.

### Regional funding Overview as of 28 March 2023



**\$55.4 million**

UNHCR's financial requirements 2023<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>1</sup> Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2023 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's Response Updates on Country Activities

*In the framework of International Women's Day, UNHCR in Panama organized the screening of 'The Swimmers', the inspiring true story of two Syrian sisters who swam for their lives to escape the war.*



### Coordination and Strengthening of Local and National Governments

- In **Panama**, UNHCR, the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), the National Migration Service (SNM), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs went on mission to Darién province and provided renewed documentation to over 100 refugees.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR facilitated a workshop on international protection for 15 officials of the Police Service.
- In **Aruba**, UNHCR launched the National Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) with the participation of officials of the Department of Labour, the Immigration Department (DIMAS), and the Guardianship Council (Voogdijraad).



### Health

- In **Guyana**, UNHCR and the Regional Health Office coordinated a medical outreach in Region 9. Sixty-five indigenous people from E'nepa and Warao communities received medical checks, medication, and counselling. People also received anti-inflammatories, antibiotics, vitamins, and deworming tablets.
- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR, through *Foundation Salù pa Tur*, provided primary health services to 1,021 people, including mental, sexual, and reproductive health services, in 2,058 consultations.



### Protection

- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR conducted key-informant interviews with *Bos di Hubentut*, *PSI Skuchami*, *SIGE*, *Kinderoorden Brakkeput*, and *Casa Manita* to address child protection concerns, particularly related to undocumented children.
- In **Belize**, UNHCR trained representatives of six media outlets, focusing on Refugee Law, the difference between refugees and migrants, and how to convey refugee stories in the media.
- In **Suriname**, UNHCR registered 88 people enabling them to access essential services and documentation.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR interviewed 110 refugees and migrants during Darien and Chiriqui's monthly monitoring exercise.



### Humanitarian Assistance

- In **Cuba**, UNHCR provided cash-based assistance to 77 people to cover rent and basic needs.



### Livelihoods and Local Integration

- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR participated in the second roundtable discussion "*Developing a framework for a more inclusive labour market*" and with Human Rights Defense Curaçao (HRDC) organized a conference to establish a platform to address the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the society.
- In **Belize**, UNHCR's partner HUMANA led a campaign where refugees and locals collected recyclable items. Bella Vista High School supported the activity.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR visited the host community of Alto Playona and met with community leaders and 25 refugees who reside in this area to discuss the participation of local and refugee members in UNHCR's community leaders' programme.





# Stories from the Field

## International Women's Day

In **Aruba**, UNHCR organized women's empowerment workshops facilitated by Venezuelan refugee and migrants. Twenty-seven women participated and learned to use social media and other technological tools for business branding. UNHCR organized two workshops focused on jewellery boxes and organic skincare products.

In **Belize**, UNHCR participated in security training focused on preventing GBV and other forms of harassment or unsafe environments. Female police officers participated in the event, which included a self-defence introductory course. The Agency and its partners held a Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education session for asylum-seeker women in Bella Vista with information on women's health and the rights of individuals seeking asylum in Belize.

In **Panama**, UNHCR participated the forums *What She Said* and *Women in International Organizations, an experience with refugees*, sharing inspiring stories on advocacy for women's rights. The Agency participated in the *Ellas Inspiran Festival* with information on UNHCR's mandate and GBV prevention responses to 160 people. Eight girls performed an art piece on forcible displacement and the importance of integration, reaching nearly 500 people. UNHCR supported the inauguration of the GBV Survivor's Community Center in La Chorrera, which will provide GBV response services to women and girls, including refugees and asylum-seekers.

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



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