

Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

April 2023

Context

By the end of April, nearly 130,000¹ persons crossed the Darién jungle for protection and better life opportunities. Five more people are crossing for every person who did so during the same period of 2022. The Minister of Foreign Affairs called on all relevant actors for "concrete actions" to respond to mixed movements in the Americas and stated that by the end of 2023, the record number of 248,000² people who crossed in 2022 could double.

Colombia and Panama's Foreign Ministers met with the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security to address irregular crossings. They agreed on commitments to be implemented within 60 days³ to combat human trafficking, enable flexible legal pathways for refugees and migrants as an alternative to crossing through Darién, and implement a plan to promote sustainable economic activities in border communities.

In April, over 40,000 people crossed the Darién jungle. Of those, 20 per cent were children⁴. On average, almost 1,350 people entered daily through Darién during this month, an increase of 70 per cent compared to January, when the average rate was 745 people per day. UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise⁵ shows that **two out of ten** of those interviewed left their country of origin due to **threats or directed attacks** against them or their families. Around **33 per cent** fled due to **fear of violence and general insecurity** in their country.

UNHCR proposed alternative pathways to allow asylum-seekers to work legally at the National Commission for the Protection of Refugees (CONARE).

UNHCR's Response

PROTECTION

UNHCR supports the State's response at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRM) and host communities in Darién and Chiriquí, some located in remote and hard-to-reach indigenous territories. Together with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR provides **information on the asylum system in Panama** and assists those in need of international protection with their **refugee status application**. Through partner HIAS, UNHCR provides **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** to those in transit and informs them about the **risks of the journey** through face-to-face sessions.

As part of its Communications with Communities' strategy, UNHCR launched the social media campaign "**Confía en el Tucán**" (Trust the Toucan) on **Facebook** and **TikTok**. The initiative is centered around "El Tucán", a character dedicated to **challenging false publications** and providing reliable information regarding the risks and dangers of crossing the Darién jungle.



¹ https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_%20POR_%20DARI%C3%89N_ABRIL_2023.pdf

² https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_DICIEMBRE_2022.pdf ³ <https://mire.gob.pa/declaracion-conjunta-trilateral/> ⁴ Idem ⁵ <https://bit.ly/3WIDIUP>







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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In April, UNHCR visited the Canaan Membrillo community to assess the conditions of public and communal facilities and identify future projects that benefit host and transit communities. UNHCR plans to distribute solar lamps and tarpaulins to enhance the security conditions in the area to protect people from harsh weather conditions.

At the indigenous community of Alto Playona, in the Emberá-Wounaán territory, UNHCR distributed 20 kitchen sets, donated a computer, and is providing IT literacy to help community delegates and a team of volunteers supporting UNHCR with Embera-Spanish translations. In April, three local and refugee women joined UNHCR's community leaders' project. The Agency visited Canaan Membrillo and Bajo Chiquito communities to agree with local leaders about the spaces to install solar panels and satellite connectivity equipment.

Key Achievements

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▪ UNHCR and HIAS reached out to nearly **3,400 people** with information on the journey risks in the ETRMs and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
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▪ UNHCR and NRC provided information to **108 people on the asylum system in Panama**; **eight** were assisted with their asylum applications.
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▪ UNHCR Panama's **Help Page** registered **15,171 visits**, and **25 people** contacted UNHCR through **Chatbot**. Most required information on asylum, gender-based violence prevention, and the new US parole programme.
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▪ In the latest UNHCR **protection monitoring exercise** in Darien and Chiriquí provinces, the Agency interviewed **100** refugees and migrants.
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▪ UNHCR and HIAS assisted **521 people** with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle in Darién and Chiriquí. The Agency supported **1,061 people** at safe spaces in the ETRM Los Planes de Gualaca, Chiriquí.



Safe and reliable information about Panama and the Darien jungle

@ConfiaEnElTucan




UNHCR CHATBOT IS ACTIVE!
 For more information on protection mechanisms and the asylum system in Panama, please contact us here!

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



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