

Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

December 2023



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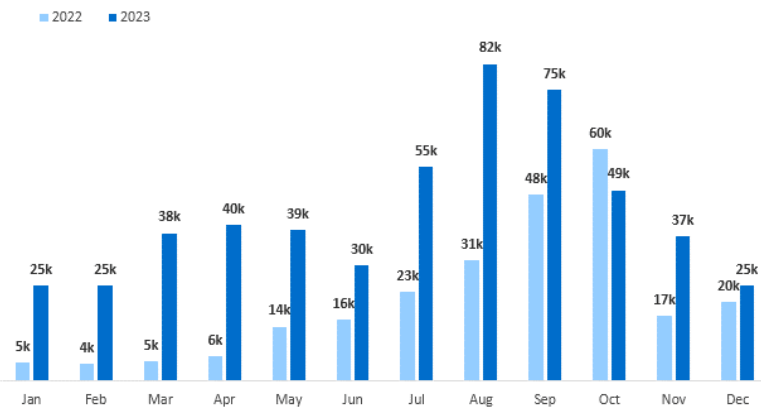
Context

In 2023, over **520,000 refugees and migrants** from more than **35 countries** crossed the Darién jungle, surpassing the overall figures of the last **12 years combined** and **doubling 2022's record numbers**¹. Sixty-three per cent of them were Venezuelans (328,650 people), eleven were Ecuadorians (57,250 people), nine were Haitians (46,422 people), and five were Chinese (25,565 people). Among this group, many have **international protection needs**.

UNHCR's protection monitoring exercises from January to December² evidenced that **one out of four** interviewed left their country of origin due to **threats or attacks** against them or their families. **Fifty-eight per cent** left due to **fear of violence and general insecurity**. **Some 38 per cent** were victims of theft, scam, or fraud during the journey through the jungle.

UNHCR and IOM issued a **joint statement** urging a more robust response in the Americas to address the mixed movements. The Director of the National Migration Service (SNM) mentioned that in 2023, the Government repatriated more than **700 individuals** and denied entry to nearly **10,000 people**. Since the release of Executive Decree No. 112, which created a Temporary Protection Permit granting a two-year temporary residency, only **10,000 people** have applied³.

Number of irregular crossings through Darién



UNHCR's Response

UNHCR **supports the Government's response** at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRM) and to host communities in Darién and Chiriquí. The Agency offers legal support to people with international protection needs, referring individuals who require specialized assistance to the relevant institutions. 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**.

In **Darién**, UNHCR's **protection monitoring** in the ETRMs San Vicente and Lajas Blancas reached **114 refugees and migrants**. In **Chiriquí**, together with the Ministry of Women Affairs, UNHCR hosted the **Strong Ties workshop** in David. A total of **22 asylum-seekers** and **six people** with **international protection needs** participated in activities to strengthen their community bonds.

The Agency donated **household appliances** for **Hogar Medalla Milagrosa**, including a stove, a washing machine, a microwave, and fans. In 2023, this organization provided shelter for **22 asylum-seekers**.



¹ https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_X_DARIEN_2023.pdf

² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105569>

³ <https://www.critica.com.pa/nacional/pocos-extranjeros-han-aplicado-para-permiso-temporal-de-proteccion-663561>




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UNHCR PROJECTS IN DARIEN AND EMBERÁ-WOUNAÁN TERRITORIES

UNHCR finalized the assembly of **two Rubhalls** and a set of **50 tarpaulins** to provide shelter to refugees and migrants staying in the ETRM Lajas Blancas. Through these initiatives, over 300 people can find protection from the harsh weather daily.

In Bajo Chiquito, UNHCR visited the local congress to discuss implementing the **Innovation Fund Project**, **the "Embera Women Mapping the Environment"**, focused on the **socio-environmental impacts** of mixed movements. The Agency shared relevant information on the initiative, which was unanimously approved. Moreover, UNHCR is working with Bajo Chiquito's community leaders to monitor the 10 solar-powered lights recently installed and their impact on the safety and security of the community. In 2024, UNHCR expects to install **100 solar-powered lights** in Darien's ETMs and the Emberá-Wounaán reception points.

Key Achievements

- 
 UNHCR and NRC provided **information** to nearly **1,600 people** on the **asylum system** in Panama and assisted **eight people** at border points with their asylum applications.
- 
 UNHCR, through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), provided **primary health care** to over **750** refugees and migrants at the ETRMs in Darien and Chiriquí.
- 
 UNHCR trained some **80 government officials** on international protection and statelessness prevention.
- 
 UNHCR Panama's **Help Page** registered **10,905 visits**, and **72 people** contacted UNHCR through the Agency's **Chatbot**.
- 
 UNHCR and HIAS provided some **4,800 people** with information on the journey risks in the ETRMs and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
- 
 In December, through its social media campaign **Confía en el Tucán**, UNHCR released **72** digital publications, reaching **3,377,608 visualizations** on TikTok and Facebook, with **111,747 engagements**.



CONFÍA EN EL TUCÁN

Safe and reliable information about Panama and the Darien jungle

@ConfíaEnElTucán




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



Private donors include those in Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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