Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

JULY 2024

Key Figures

221,582
people have crossed the Darien Jungle as of July 2024.

20,519
people in July.

61 per cent
of those interviewed by UNHCR left their country due to threats and attacks or generalized violence.

Context

The National Border Service (SENAFRONT) announced the closure of several unauthorized paths used by refugees and migrants to enter Darien irregularly. Officials reinforced the routes with barbed wire, establishing a humanitarian corridor and security checks through the Cañas Blancas crossing, which leads to the Bajo Chiquito community. The Minister of Public Security mentioned the measures aimed at protecting its citizens and safeguarding refugees and migrants from smugglers.

Panamanian and US officials visited San Vicente and Lajas Blancas Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs) as part of their Memorandum of Understanding. The Government announced that repatriations will be based on migratory status and previous records and will ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is upheld. The US is providing six million dollars to support Panama in these initiatives.

The President will hold press conferences every Thursday to discuss topics of national importance. In the first one, he mentioned that following the closure of some trails in the jungle, the Government registered a decrease in irregular entries. In July, 20,519 people crossed, a 34 percent decrease from the previous month and the most significant drop recorded this year. Mulino mentioned that Venezuelans continue to be the main group crossing and that their election outcome might affect the flows. He later announced the suspension of diplomatic relations with this country after questioning Nicolás Maduro's win.

UNHCR's response

UNHCR works to support the Government's response at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs in its Spanish acronym) and to host communities in Darien and Chiriquí. With the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR offers legal support to people with international protection needs, and refers individuals requiring specialized assistance to the relevant institutions. UNHCR and NRC also provide information on the asylum system in Panama and assist with refugee status applications. Through HIAS, UNHCR provides Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and provides people in transit with information on the risks of the route through informative sessions. Through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), UNHCR delivers primary health care to refugees and migrants staying at the Government's ETRMs.

In Bajo Chiquito, indigenous women are gaining digital skills and leading environmental data collection to inform effective waste management. To read more about the work of the Emberá-Wounaan Delegadas Comunitarias, please click here.

Key achievements

5,435
people informed on the risks of the journey

4,369
people informed on the asylum system in Panama

539
people assisted with primary health care

139
people reached through UNHCR's border protection monitoring

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

PANAMA MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE
MIXED MOVEMENTS - DARIEN AND CHIRIQUI

UNHCR's initiatives in Darién and Chiriquí

In Chiriquí, UNHCR and 12 refugees participated in a rally in Paso Canoas to raise awareness about human trafficking. The Agency hosted the "Celebrating Beauty" activity, enabling refugees to share their experiences while learning strategies to boost their self-esteem.

In David, UNHCR hosted a peaceful coexistence event with 39 people, including refugees and asylum-seekers. Participants learned strategies to strengthen emotional resilience. UNHCR and HIAS Community promoters hosted the "Shine with Courage" and "Brave and Imperfect" women empowerment activities, with the participation of 18 refugee women and locals. UNHCR participated in a plenary session of the Commission for the Protection and Assistance of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations (COPPAMI) and shared updates on the Agency's work.

In Darién, as part of its Innovation Project on waste management, UNHCR met with local and Indigenous authorities in Darien, including the mayor of Cémaco and Bajo Chiquito's Indigenous leader. UNHCR, NRC, and the Ombudsperson Office visited Boca de Cupe to counsel refugees living in this area and identified 30 people needing assistance renewing their residency documents. The Agency also met with Centro American Parliament (PARLACEN) representatives to assess and discuss Darien's mixed movement situation.

Other achievements

UNHCR's Help Page registered 10,566 visits in July. For more information on international protection and the asylum system, please contact us scanning our QR.

UNHCR met with the Vice-Ministry of Government and the Director of the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) to discuss joint actions to strengthen the asylum system in Panama with technical support from the Agency.

UNHCR, through HIAS, assisted 50 people with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle.

In July, through a social media campaign, Confía en el Tucán, UNHCR released 13 social media posts. This month, the campaign reached 591,124 visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 23,081 engagements.

UNHCR Multi-Country Office in Panama thanks the contributions from our donors in 2024

Private donors from Italy and the Republic of Korea, Australia for UNHCR, España con ACNUR, Japan for UNHCR, and the Dutch Postcode Lottery

For more information | Margarida Loureiro, Deputy Representative at loureirm@unhcr.org | Benedetta Pignatti, External Relations Officer at pignattb@unhcr.org
For media interviews | **panpamedia@unhcr.org** Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) | **@acnurpanama**