



Panama

July - September 2024

Key Figures

Nearly

10,500 Refugees and asylum-seekers live in Panama, mainly from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

 **62,233** People crossed the Darien jungle between July and September.

UNHCR informed
 **14,008** people about the risks of the route, Panama's asylum system, and UNHCR's mandate.

Context

In July, President **José Raúl Mulino** was inaugurated for the 2024-2029 term and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US to curb irregular entries in Darien. By 30 September, **263,296** people had crossed the jungle, marking a 36 percent decrease from last year's figures. Officials credited the reduction to the implementation of **new border and repatriation measures**. By the end of September, they had deported over 600 people from Colombia, Ecuador, and India.

Following Venezuela's elections, Mulino suspended **diplomatic relations** with the country, questioning Maduro's win and advocating for a **review of the results**.

The President attended the **MERCOSUR** Summit in Paraguay, and expressed Panama's interest in joining the trade bloc. He highlighted irregular crossings' humanitarian and environmental impacts through the Darien jungle. At the **UN General Assembly**, Mulino reiterated Panama's call for regional cooperation to address this matter.

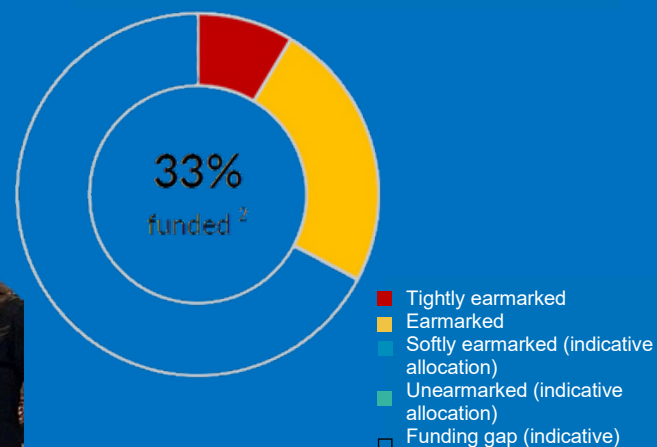
Panama, Colombia, and the US held their third **Trilateral Meeting** to discuss the displacement crisis. Participants committed to encouraging dialogue with other regional actors to reduce irregular crossings, promote alternative legal pathways for those in transit, and expand protection mechanisms with a human rights-based approach.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and local students who were part of one of the winning teams in UNHCR's 2024 Youth Leadership and Mentoring Programme showcased "Daniel's Diary" at Panama's International Book Fair. This project fosters inclusion and integration by encouraging participants to sensitize their communities in supporting refugees. "Daniel's Diary" highlights the experiences and challenges those forcibly displaced face.



Regional funding Overview

as of 30 September 2024



\$56.1 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2024

¹ Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2024 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.**

² The percentage funded is indicative.

UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR works with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in Panama. UNHCR and IOM co-chair the UN inter-agency Human Mobility Group, coordinating protection and humanitarian support for mixed movements. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), HIAS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), and the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH).



Coordination with Local Authorities | UNHCR met with the new **Office** to discuss protection and capacity-building plans. The Ombudsperson and UNHCR visited Puerto Lara and Boca de Cupe communities, providing 170 people with information on international protection and identifying 30 people needing renewal of residency cards.



Protection | UNHCR trained 140 officials on international protection and interviewed 1,023 through joint UNHCR/UNICEF protection monitoring. UNHCR and its partners informed 12,980 people staying at reception points about the route's risks and 9,022 people nationwide about the asylum system.



Humanitarian Assistance | UNHCR provided primary health care to 1,754 refugees and migrants at the Government's Temporary Reception Centre. Through HIAS, the Agency assisted 165 people with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences fleeing violence and persecution, and crossing the jungle. UNHCR provided cash assistance to 403 refugees and asylum-seekers to improve access to health care, documentation, and shelter. From this group, 203 people are new beneficiaries. UNHCR donated 2,616 core relief items, including mosquito nets, blankets, and sleeping mats, to government institutions, indigenous community leaders, and refugees and migrants at border points.



Local Integration | UNHCR hosted "Celebrating Beauty," where 12 refugees shared experiences and learned self-esteem strategies. In David, UNHCR hosted a peaceful coexistence event with 39 participants, including refugees and asylum-seekers, focusing on emotional resilience and interpersonal skills. UNHCR and HIAS hosted "Shine with Courage" and "Brave and Imperfect" social integration activities, with 18 refugee women and locals, discussing societal expectations and mechanisms to achieve common goals.



Economic Integration Programme for Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Panama

In August, UNHCR and the City of Knowledge Foundation launched its **livelihood programme** to integrate refugees and asylum-seekers through entrepreneurship and employment. The pilot targets individuals aged 18 to 60 residing in Panama City, Colón, and Panama Oeste. Key focus areas include employability, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and continuous education. Participants can join training and mentorship programmes like "Emprendiendo Juntos", "Impulsa tu Negocio", and "HechoxRefugiados" to enhance their living conditions.

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UNHCR Panama Operational Presence

