FACT SHEET

Panama

October - December 2024

Key Figures

Nearly

10,500

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

38,907

People crossed the Darien jungle between October and December.

UNHCR informed

5,737 people nationwide about Panama's asylum system and UNHCR's mandate.

Context

Following the Government's transition process, in 2024, the National Commission for Refugee Protection (CONARE) held two meetings. It recognized 38 refugees, including individuals from Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Colombia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Ukraine. Applicants from five of the cases entered through Darien and three from Costa Rica.

During the seventy-fifth session of UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom), the Vice Minister of Government emphasized the need for enhanced international cooperation to address forced displacement challenges. He highlighted Panama's efforts, in collaboration with UNHCR and civil society, to guarantee the fundamental rights of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Panama participated in the 40th Anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees: Towards a New Ten-Year Declaration and Action Plan for Protection (2024-2034). The country emphasized that four decades after its adoption, the declaration continues to symbolize hope, particularly in a world facing increasing forced displacement due to conflict, violence, and climate change. Panama urged continued efforts to ensure that refugees find refuge, dignity, and stability.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism, UNHCR organized community interventions in Bugaba, David, La Chorrera, Panamá, and San Miguelito to foster the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers. The initiatives included a community fair, rallies on prevention of violence against women and girls, cinema screenings, mural paintings, and the launch of the campaign "Your Voice Counts, Turn the Silence into Colour," showcasing its visuals in Chiriquí, and Panama's Metro stations.

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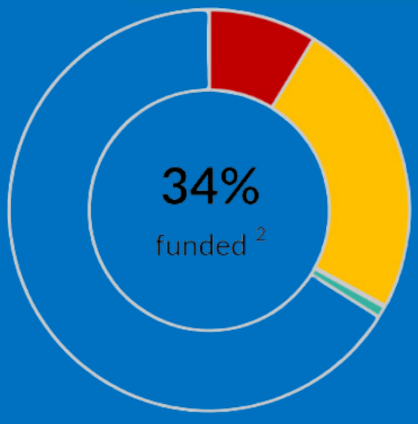
Regional funding Overview

as of 30 December 2024



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

$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. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), HIAS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH), and City of Knowledge Foundation (FCDS).

Coordination with Local Authorities |UNHCR conducted a Quality Assurance Initiative with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) to identify gaps in refugee protection procedures and enhance case management.

Protection | UNHCR trained 74 border and administrative officials on international protection and interviewed 1,146 people through its joint monitoring exercises with UNICEF. UNHCR interviewed 60 refugees and migrants at the Temporary Reception Centre (ETRM) in Lajas Blancas as part of a Communication with Communities strategy to identify needs and the information channels people use before crossing the border. UNHCR hosted a seminar on the Risk of Statelessness at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sensitizing 30 officials on ensuring access to fundamental rights for stateless persons.

Humanitarian Assistance | UNHCR, through CRP, provided primary health care services to 1,423 people, including refugees and asylum-seekers, at the Government's ETRM. Through HIAS, the Agency assisted 179 people in border areas with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences fleeing their home country. Following November's floods that affected several provinces in the country, UNHCR donated 5,400 blankets, 9,600 sleeping mats, and 428 kitchen sets to the Government for distribution to the most affected regions. The Agency also donated 272 core relief items, including mosquito nets, blankets, and sleeping mats, to government officials and Indigenous communities, including refugees and asylum-seekers at border points.

Local Integration | UNHCR participated in ONPAR's 'Siembra de Banderas' flag-placing ceremony, commemorating the beginning of Panama's national celebrations and the country's commitment to fostering the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama.

© UNHCR/ Tito Herrera

'Hecho x Refugiados' Launches its 2024 Backpack Collection

UNHCR and FCDS introduced 2024 HechoxRefugiados (Made by Refugees) entrepreneurship programme. The Agency supported 13 refugee and asylum-seeking women to develop 600-line backpacks made from recycled materials helping reduce waste, promoting a circular economy, and providing these entrepreneurs with sustainable livelihoods. HechoxRefugiados sold 500 backpacks online through its website, social media channels like FCDS, Instagram page, and the CuantoApp business platform.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Australia | Belgium | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Guyana | Ireland | Japan | the Republic of Korea | The Kingdom of the Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS | Private donors from Italy, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands, Australia for UNHCR, España con ACNUR, Japan for UNHCR, Sweden for UNHCR, the Dutch Postcode Lottery, UK for UNHCR, UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe and USA for UNHCR.

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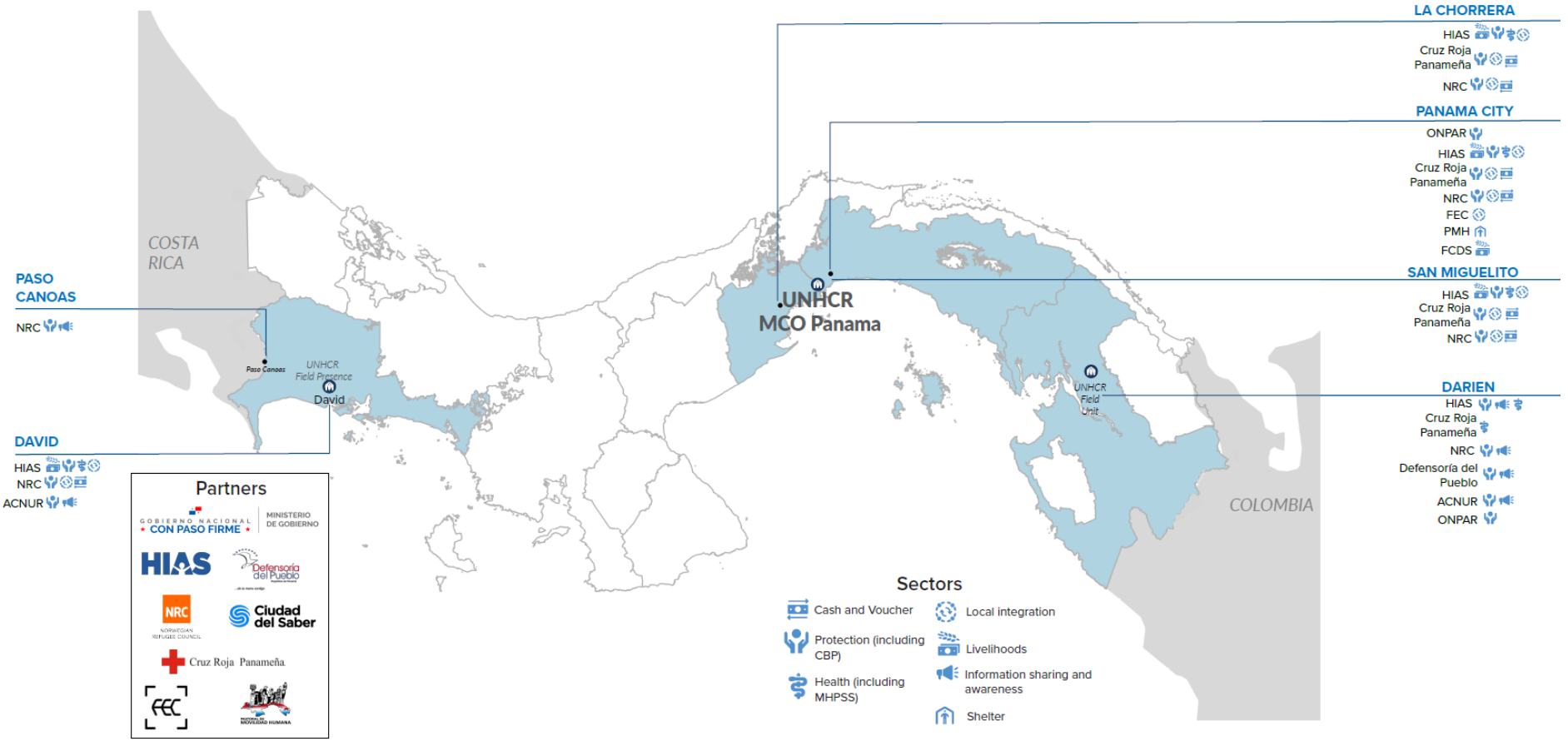
UNHCR Panama Operational Presence



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