

Mixed Movements Darién

December 2022

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Lajas Blancas Migratory Reception Centre (ERM)

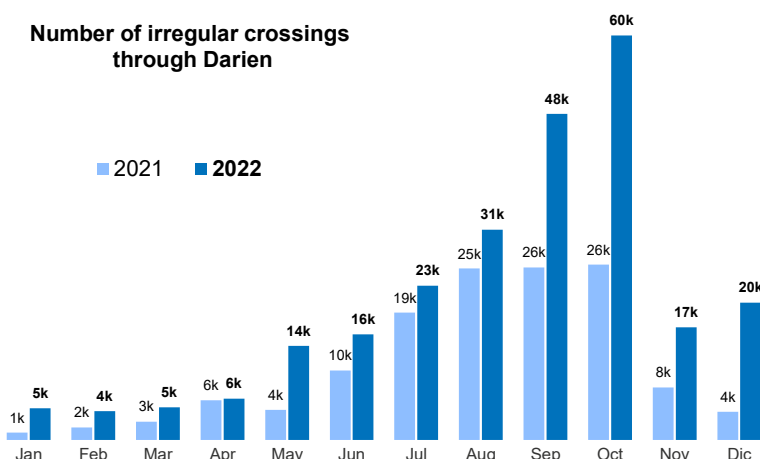
Context

In 2022, nearly **250,000** people of over 30 nationalities crossed through the perilous Darién jungle¹, seeking protection and better life. After a drop in the trend in November (**16,632**), December registered a slight increase in the number of irregular entries (**20,297**)², making 2022 a record year for crossings in Panamanian history³.

Of the **248,284** people recorded crossing irregularly in 2022, **61 per cent** were Venezuelans (150,327), 12 per cent Ecuadorians (29,356), and 6 per cent Haitians (22,435). In December, **Ecuadorians (7,821) and Haitians (5,502) crossing**, surpassed Venezuelans (1,374). **Indians and Afghans** are also among the largest groups, registering nearly 800 and 600 people crossing in December, respectively⁴.

The latest UNHCR **protection monitoring exercise**⁵ showed that **four out of ten** people interviewed left their country of origin or residence due to **personal or family threats and violence**, while **50 per cent** fled due to fear of **general insecurity and violence**. Additionally, **eight out of ten** received information about the journey from **friends and relatives**, and an alarming **43 per cent** reported being victims of **robbery and fraud during the journey**.

Number of irregular crossings
through Darién



The irregular crossings through Darién in 2022 (248,284), almost doubles the unprecedented record registered in 2021 (133,726). Source: [National Migration Service](https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/ma2022/PDF/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_DICIEMBRE_2022.pdf).

UNHCR's Response

PROTECTION

In December, UNHCR assisted over 850 vulnerable people in the Migratory Reception Centres (ERMs) and other reception points in Darién. Through a permanent presence and regular protection monitoring exercises, the Agency offers legal support to people with protection needs, referring individuals who require specialized assistance to relevant institutions.

Together with partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR continues to provide **information on the asylum system** in Panama at border areas, as well as legal assistance to asylum seekers with their **refugee status application**. Through partner HIAS, UNHCR provides **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**, and supports people in transit, in Darién and Chiriquí, on the **risks of the route** through **informative sessions**. Importantly, UNHCR is also providing 24-hour **interpretation services** to non-Spanish speakers, proven to be key to guaranteeing their access to basic services available at the ERMs.

¹ National Migration Service https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/ma2022/PDF/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_DICIEMBRE_2022.pdf

³ Available at <https://twitter.com/migracionpanama/status/1609686798288003074?s=20&t=BLAQmVNgXhD3oMra1KJCoQ>

² Idem

⁴ Ibid, 1. ⁵ Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/98128>









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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In December, UNHCR and partner Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) provided primary health care to some **1,900 refugees and migrants** (527 men, 441 women, and 931 children) at the ERM of San Vicente and Lajas Blancas in Darién, as well as at Los Planes de Gualaca in Chiriquí. A total of 13 pregnant women received assistance.

To strengthen **Communication with Communities (CwC)**, UNHCR conducted a **data collection** exercise to understand the information and communication needs of the people in transit. A total of 12 people from 8 different countries participated in the assessment, and **60 per cent** of them indicated that information on the **risks of the journey** is their main topic of interest.

Key Achievements

-  In December, UNHCR and partner HIAS, reached out to over **1,800 people** with information on the **journey risks** at the ERM and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
-  UNHCR and partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provided information to **67 people on the asylum system in Panama**, and **11** were assisted with their asylum application, including an elderly Venezuelan, a male Cuban and five other Venezuelan asylum seekers who are temporarily residing in Darién.
-  Since its launch in the last weeks of October, over **80 people have reached out to UNHCR through Chatbot** asking for information on asylum applications, among other protection concerns.
-  UNHCR donated a total of **120 pairs** of protective eyewear to CRP to support the WASH response in the ERM. The Agency also handed over to this partner some **65 bags of clothing** to be distributed to vulnerable people in Darién.
-  UNHCR conducted a **training for 36 partner staff** in Darién, on camp coordination (**CCCM**) and protection. Participants included the National Border Service (SENAFRONT), SNM, National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), and six NGOs.
-  UNHCR and partner HIAS assisted over **550 people** with **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle in the Migratory Reception Centres and other reception points in both Darién (116 people) and Chiriquí (436 people).



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 2022



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For more information | Philippa Candler, Representative at candler@unhcr.org | Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso, Associate Communications Officer at bruttome@unhcr.org