



Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

March 2023

Context

On 1 March, following the Government's orders to halt the transportation services from Darién to Chiriquí due to the two traffic accidents that occurred in February involving refugees and migrants¹, the National Migration Service (SNM) announced the resumption of the bus transfers.

After assessing the country's situation, the [Human Rights Committee](#) published its findings on Panama's implementation of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)². Among other topics, the Committee expressed its concern regarding alleged reports of killings, disappearances, sexual violence, trafficking, robberies, intimidation, and threats by criminal groups in Darién, further heightening the risks faced by refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants crossing the jungle. Although the Government has not released a public statement regarding these findings, the [Minister of Government](#) indicated that Panama is aware of its pending commitments related to human rights matters and aims to address them, acknowledging the key role of the Committee for this task.

As of March 2023, nearly [87,400 people](#) entered irregularly through Darién³, [six times more](#) than those who arrived during the same period in 2022. The latest UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise⁴ shows that [three out of ten](#) interviewed left their country of origin due to [threats or directed attacks](#) against them or their families. Around [35 per cent](#) fled due to [fear of violence and general insecurity](#) in their country.

UNHCR's Response

PROTECTION

UNHCR [supports the State's response](#) at the ETRMs and host communities in Darién and Chiriquí, some located in remote and hard-to-reach indigenous territories. Together with partner 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](#). Furthermore, through partner HIAS, UNHCR provides [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\)](#) to those in transit and informs them about the [risks of the journey](#) through informative face-to-face sessions.

In March, UNHCR conducted a [Community-Based Protection \(CBP\)](#) and [Communication with Communities \(CwC\)](#) monitoring mission to the indigenous community of Bajo Chiquito, currently one of the main reception points in Darién. The Agency held a focus group discussion with the community delegates on [access to rights through communication](#) and alternative ways to improve [information sharing](#) at the community level.



¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99652> ² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/un-human-rights-committee-publishes-findings-egypt-panama-peru-sri-lanka>
³ https://www.migracion.qob.pa/images/mq2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_%20DARIEN_2023.pdf ⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100197>









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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

UNHCR and partner Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), provided **primary health care** to **4,446** refugees and migrants (1627 men, 1,197 women, 820 boys, and 802 girls) at the three Government temporary reception centers in Darién and Chiriquí. The Agency also distributed **5,012 Core Relief Items (CRIs)** in Chiriquí and Darien, including blankets, clothing, and mosquito nets to people in transit at the ETRMs and other reception points.

UNHCR participated in a **joint documentation mission** with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), the National Migration Service (SNM), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which took place in the communities of Metetí and Yaviza in Darién. The mission aimed to provide **documentation to refugees** residing in the indigenous communities of Alto Playona, Tortuga, Bajo Chiquito, and Yaviza, who required the renovation of their IDs, benefiting over 100 people. In **the past years**, UNHCR has been supporting these communities with rehabilitation of public spaces such as local schools and a children’s playground in Alto Playona.

Key Achievements

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 UNHCR and partner HIAS reached out to nearly **2,870 people** with information on the journey risks in the ETRMs and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
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 UNHCR and partner NRC provided information to over **100 people on the asylum system in Panama**, and **seven** were assisted with their asylum applications.
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 UNHCR Panama’s **Help Page** registered **11,474 visits**, and **19 people** contacted UNHCR through its **Chatbot**. Most required information on asylum, gender-based violence prevention, and the new US parole programme.
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 In the latest UNHCR’s **protection monitoring exercise** in Darien and Chiriquí provinces, the Agency interviewed **110** refugees and migrants.
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 UNHCR distributed **over 5,000 CRIs**, including blankets and clothes for people in transit in Darien and Chiriquí ETRMs.
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 UNHCR and partner HIAS assisted **684 people** with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle in Darién and Chiriquí. The Agency also supported **545 people** at safe spaces in the ETRM Los Planes de Gualaca, Chiriquí



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, including private donors in Australia



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