




March-April 2023

## Key Figures

Over  

**13,000**  
 Refugees and asylum-seekers live in Panama, mainly from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.


**127,687**  
 People have crossed the Darien jungle between January and April 2023, six times the number of those who arrived during the same period in 2022.


**8,756**  
 People were directly reached by UNHCR with information on the journey risks at the Temporary Migratory Reception Centres (ETRM) and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.

## Context

Panama has approximately 13,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, most from Latin America. Due to its location, Panama is also a transit country for many people moving northwards.

Nearly 130,000 people crossed the Darien jungle seeking protection and better life opportunities. Authorities estimate that by the end of 2023, the record number of 248,284 people who crossed in 2022 could double.

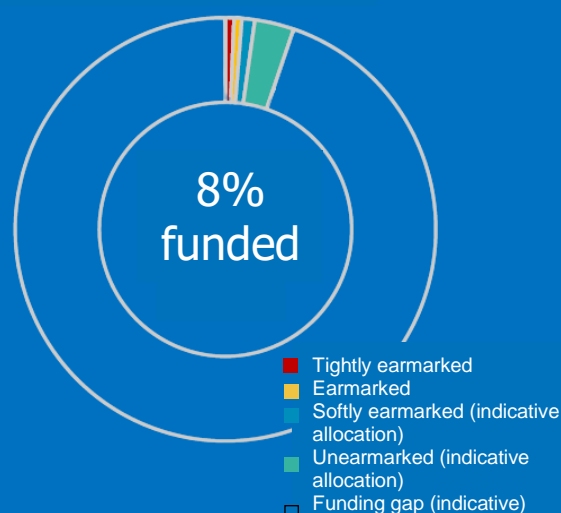
In March, the President sanctioned the law creating the Ministry of Women. The Ministry of Labour (MITRADEL) updated regulations on six categories of work permits, including a humanitarian protection permit for refugees, asylum-seekers, and victims of trafficking. MITRADEL included a work permit for stateless persons for the first time.

UNHCR provides technical support to government entities accountable for refugee protection, including the Ministry of Interior and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR). In April, UNHCR proposed alternative pathways to allow asylum-seekers to work legally at the National Commission for the Protection of Refugees (CONARE).

In March and April, UNHCR and partner NRC provided information on the asylum system in Panama to over 200 people. The Agency also provided legal assistance to over 40 people with asylum applications, and access to fundamental rights.

## Regional funding Overview

as of 27 April, 2023



**\$55.4 million**  
 UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

<sup>1</sup> Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2023 including requirements for the operations and activities in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded is indicative.

## UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR works closely with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in Panama. UNHCR and IOM co-chair the UN inter-agency group on human mobility, coordinating humanitarian support related to mixed movements in Darien and Chiriquí. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), Fútbol con Corazón (FCC), HIAS, NRC, Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) and the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH).



**Protection** | UNHCR and local authorities were in Darién province, providing renewed documentation to over 100 refugees. The Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs trained 60 Police officers appointed to Colon Province on international protection as part of a joint plan to prevent statelessness. UNHCR interviewed over 200 refugees and migrants during its monthly protection monitoring in Darien. Through HIAS, UNHCR provided over 8,750 people with information on the risk of the route, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to over 1,200 people in Darien and Chiriquí.



**Cash-Based Assistance (CBI)** | UNHCR, through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), assisted 382 households with cash-based assistance for food, medicines, livelihoods, education, documentation, rent and temporary accommodation, reaching more than 1,100 people during March and April.



**Humanitarian Assistance** | UNHCR visited the Canan-Membrillo community to assess existing community infrastructures and identify projects that benefit locals, refugees, and migrants. UNHCR will distribute solar lamps and tarpaulins to enhance the security conditions in the area and protect refugees and migrants from harsh weather. In March and April, UNHCR distributed over 5,000 Core Relief Items (CRIs) in Darien, Chiriquí, and other reception points.



**Local Integration** | UNHCR visited the indigenous community of Alto Playona and met with community leaders and 25 refugees who reside in this area and agreed to their participation in UNHCR's community leaders' project.



### Young Leaders advocate for refugee and asylum-seeker inclusion

UNHCR participated in the *Ellas Inspiran* Festival organized by the National Secretary for Children, Adolescents and Family (SENNIAF) and the Municipality of San Miguelito. During the event, UNHCR shared information about its mandate and GBV prevention with 160 students and women in San Miguelito. A group of eight girls performed a play on why refugees leave their countries of origin and the importance of integration in Panama; nearly 500 people participated in the event.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the European Union, the United States of America, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. We also thank the fundamental support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Belgium | Canada | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | private donors in Australia

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# UNHCR Panama Operational Presence

