

Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

May 2023



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Context

According to the National Migration Service (SNM), 38,962 people entered irregularly through the Darién Jungle in May 2023¹. This is the first time in the year that the number of those crossing through the jungle has not exceeded the records of the previous month. Different factors, including the start of the rainy season, the lifting of Title 42 and the subsequent implementation of new border policies in the United States, might have contributed to this decrease. The coming months will show how lasting this may be.

Following a visit to Darién, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly Clements, appealed for urgent support for Latin American and Caribbean countries², which host most of the 20 million forcibly displaced people in the region. So far in 2023, 166,649³ people have crossed through the Darién jungle seeking protection and better life opportunities. This is five times the number of those who arrived during the same period in 2022.

UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise⁴ shows that **three out of ten** of those interviewed left their country of origin due to **threats or attacks directed** against them or their families. Around **30 per cent** fled due to **fear of violence and general insecurity** in their country. Furthermore, three out of ten also experienced mistreatment or abuse during the journey through the jungle, and 21 per cent reported being victims of threats, intimidation, and attacks.

UNHCR's Response

PROTECTION

UNHCR **supports the State's response** at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRM) and host communities in Darién and Chiriquí. Together with the 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**. 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 face-to-face sessions.

In May, together with NRC and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), UNHCR trained 27 officials of the SNM on international protection, conflict resolution, and the asylum system in Panama. Additionally, the Agency installed a protection desk to conduct confidential interviews at the ETRM Lajas Blancas, further assessing the protection needs of asylum-seekers hosted in this reception centre.



The Agency conducted its monthly protection monitoring exercise and interviewed over 100 refugees and migrants staying in Darién and Chiriquí's reception points.

¹ https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2021/pdf/IRREGULARES_%20POR_%20DARIEN_MAYO_2023.pdf ² https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/un-deputy-high-commissioner-refugees-urges-increased-support-latin-america#_ga=2.149138932.35835195.1684871364-856975603.1684871364 ³ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101323> ⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101323>









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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In May, UNHCR, through its partner the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), provided primary health care to 1,582 men, 1,334 women, 860 boys and 807 girls, staying at the Government’s temporary reception centers in Darien and Chiriquí. Moreover, UNHCR donated medicines and medical items to CRP for the provision of health assistance to approximately 10,000 people.

UNHCR donated 22 Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) to the indigenous community of Alto Playona in the Emberá-Wounaan territory as part of the efforts to address the needs of this host community. Members of UNHCR’s community leaders’ project participated in the assembling of the RHUs and met with the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees during her visit to Panama, to discuss their integration initiatives and the legal challenges they are facing.

Key Achievements

- 
 UNHCR reached out to nearly **900 people** with information on the journey risks in the ETRMs and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
- 
 UNHCR, through CRP, provided primary health care to nearly **4,600** refugees and migrants at the Government’s temporary reception centers in Darien and Chiriquí.
- 
 UNHCR and NRC provided information to **1,155 people** on the asylum system in Panama and assisted **31** people with their asylum applications.
- 
 UNHCR donated **375 core relief items (CRIs)**, including mosquito nets, and sleeping mats, to authorities and partners for its distribution in the ETRMs and Canaan-Membrillo Community.
- 
 UNHCR Panama’s **Help Page** registered **21,657 visits**, and **45 people** contacted UNHCR through the Agency’s **Chatbot**. Most required information on asylum, gender-based violence prevention, and the new US border measures.
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 Through its social media campaign “**Confía en el Tucán**”, UNHCR released **54** digital publications, reaching **35,885 visualizations** on Tik Tok and Facebook, with **7,121 engagements**.



CONFÍA EN EL TUCÁN

Safe and reliable information about Panama and the Darien jungle

@ConfiaEnElTucan




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 unmarked donors in 2023



Private donors including those in Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Spain

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