

Panama

January - March 2024

Key Figures

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

110,008 People **crossed the Darien jungle** between January and March, surpassing the number of refugees and migrants who entered during the same period last year.

UNHCR informed some **11,700** people about the risk of the route, the asylum system in Panama, and UNHCR's mandate.

Context

In January, Panama handed Belize the pro-tempore Presidency of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). During its presidency, the country made significant progress in refugee protection. In 2023, the country recognized 134 refugees, a 235 per cent increase from the number registered in the previous year, including members of family reunification cases.

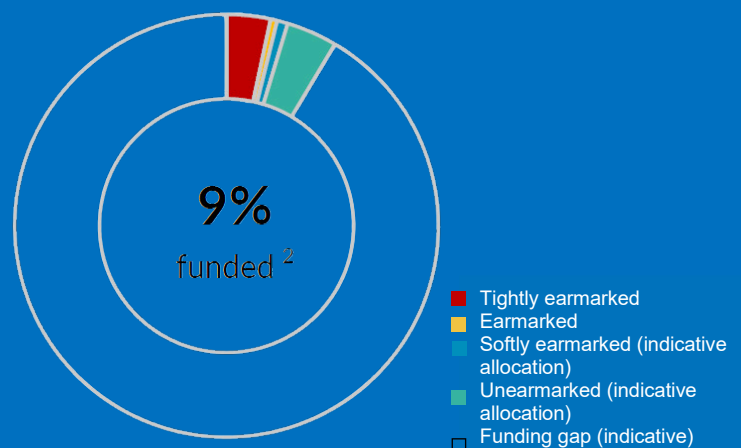
The humanitarian crisis in the Darien Jungle has worsened. By the end of March, over 110,000 people had crossed, representing a 26 per cent increase from last year's numbers recorded for the same period. The Government estimates that over 700,000 people could cross this year.

Security incidents in border areas marked the year's first quarter. In the Temporary Migratory Reception Centres (ETRM), authorities detained 12 people allegedly providing unauthorized money transfer services, seizing over USD \$78,000 in remittances. In February, a boat carrying 27 passengers, most of them Afghans, capsized near the coasts of Guna Yala, causing the death of five people, including a boy. In March, a security incident involving over 250 people in the ETRM San Vicente destroyed official vehicles and ten Government prefabricated modules. Authorities provisionally detained 45 individuals and charged them with crimes against patrimony and collective security.

On International Women's Day (IWD), UNHCR and the City of Knowledge Foundation organized a recreational event for 30 refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community members. The attendees participated in wellness activities such as yoga, painting, and empowerment sessions for women and girls.



Regional funding Overview as of 31 March 2024



\$56.1 million
UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

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 for mixed movements. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), HIAS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) and the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH).



Coordination with Local Authorities | With UNHCR's support, the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), inaugurated its field branch in Meteti. UNHCR assisted ONPAR in a documentation mission in Chiriquí, interviewing asylum-seekers from eight cases and helping 12 people renew their IDs. UNHCR and the Ombudsman Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement initiatives to strengthen the protection response to asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR donated over 11,000 leaflets on GBV prevention to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MIDEM), which will be distributed among the Ministry's 17 Integral Care Facilities (CAIs).



Protection | UNHCR and partners trained 150 Government officials on international protection and statelessness prevention. UNHCR interviewed 328 refugees and migrants during the monthly protection monitoring in Darien and Chiriquí. UNHCR and partners informed some 11,700 people about the risk of the route, the asylum system, and UNHCR's mandate. With NRC, UNHCR assisted 16 people with asylum applications in border areas.



Humanitarian Assistance | UNHCR provided cash assistance to 424 refugees and asylum-seekers (166 households) to enhance access to health, documentation, and shelter. Of these, 319 were new beneficiaries. UNHCR provided primary health care to 633 refugees and migrants at the ETRMs. UNHCR and its partners assisted 564 people with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences. In Canaan-Membrillo, UNHCR donated 250 mosquito nets, 200 blankets, and 25 sleeping bags for distribution among community members, refugees, and migrants in transit.



Advocacy | UNHCR launched a **metro campaign** across 10 Panama City stations, reaching 240,000 daily commuters. The campaign highlighted how New Year's resolutions often differ for people forced to flee.



(IN) VISIBLES AVANT PREMIERE

UNHCR premiered its documentary series "(In) Visibles," co-produced by ECOCINEMA. The series tells the stories of six asylum-seekers living in Latin America and the Caribbean and their struggles to find safety while rebuilding their lives. The Agency hosted a space to answer the audience's questions, opening a space for reflection on forced displacement. Over 100 people participated, including government and diplomatic officials, partners, and asylum-seekers from FEC's programme, Enlances.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Australia | Belgium | CERF | Denmark | European Union | Ireland | Republic of Korea | The Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |

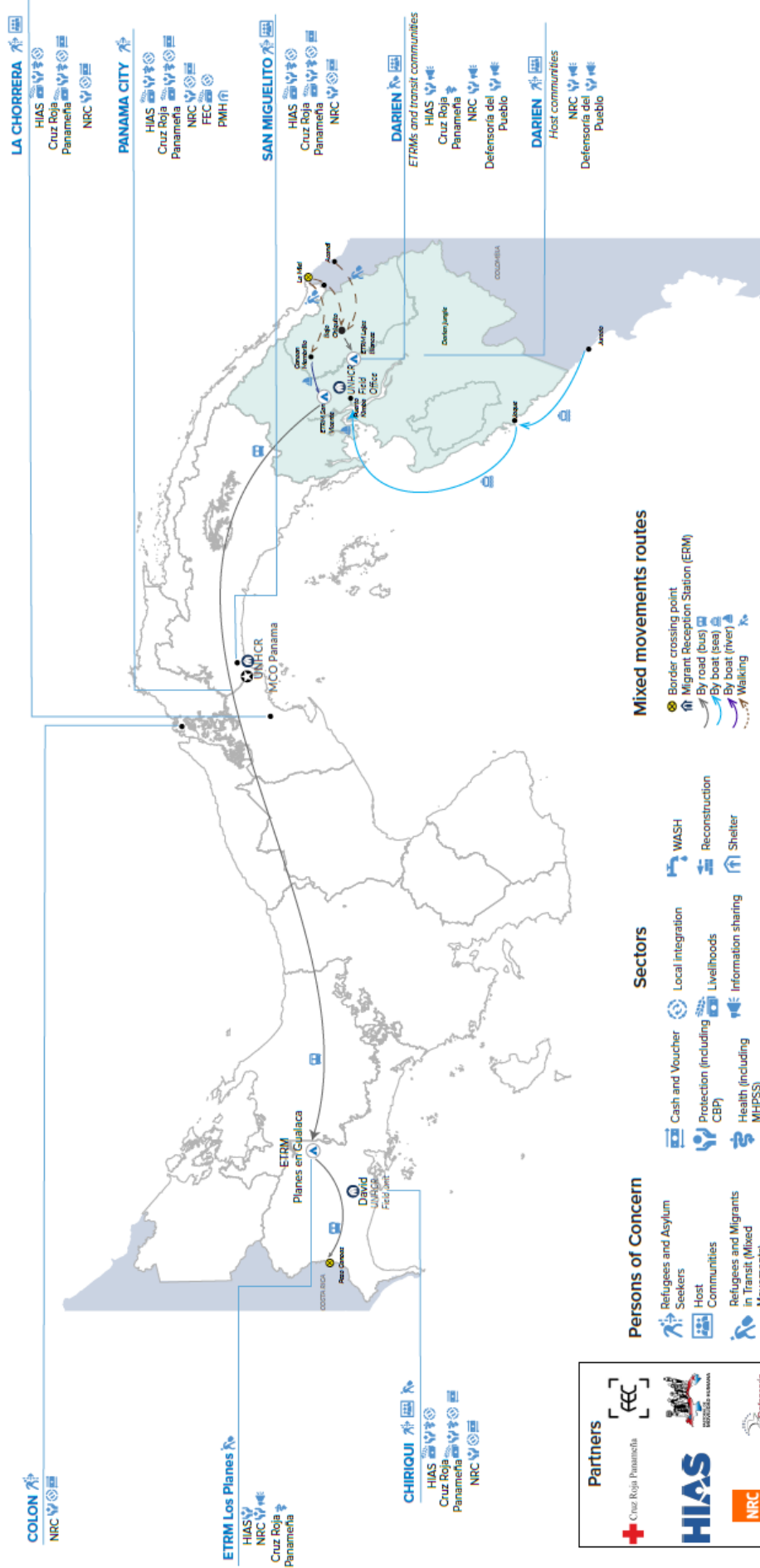
For more information:

Margarida Loureiro, Deputy Representative, loureim@unhcr.org

Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso, Associate Communications Officer, bruttome@unhcr.org

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UNHCR Panama Operational Presence



- Mixed movements routes**
- Border crossing point
 - Migrant Reception Station (ERM)
 - By road (bus)
 - By boat (sea)
 - By boat (river)
 - Walking

- Sectors**
- Cash and Voucher
 - Protection (including CBP)
 - Health (including MHPS)
 - Local integration
 - Livelihoods
 - Information sharing
 - WASH
 - Reconstruction
 - Shelter

- Persons of Concern**
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 - Host Communities
 - Refugees and Migrants in Transit (Mixed Movements)

Partners

- Cruz Roja Panamá
- HIAS
- NRC
- Defensoría del Pueblo

The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
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