

Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

MAY 2024

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Context

Panama held general elections on 5 May. [José Raúl Mulino](#), from the *Salvar Panama* political alliance, obtained 34 per cent of the votes and was formally proclaimed the 2024-2029 President. Mulino announced plans to [stop irregular border crossings](#) through the Darien jungle. The President-elect stated that with international aid, his administration would initiate a repatriation process for those arriving at the border respecting human rights.

The National Migration Service ([SNM](#)) is working on a transition scheme for the new Government regarding the border situation in Darien. SNM estimates that the number of people crossing will increase by 25 per cent compared with last year. As of 31 May, [170,014 people](#) crossed through Darien irregularly.

On 16 May, Mulino announced 14 out of 17 of his [cabinet appointments](#), including the designated Minister of Public Security, Frank Ábrego, who stated that controlling irregular entries in the Darien jungle is a priority, with the new administration undergoing [diplomatic discussions](#) to develop a plan.

Heavy rains persisted in Darien, and the rising of the Chucunaque river destroyed access bridges to Canaan-Membrillo and Bajo Chiquito, preventing land access to these transit communities.

UNHCR's Response

UNHCR, with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), work to support the [Government's response](#) at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRM in its Spanish acronym) and to [host communities](#) in Darien and Chiriquí. UNHCR offers [legal support](#) to people with international protection needs, and refers individuals requiring specialized assistance to the relevant institutions. UNHCR and NRC also provide [information on the asylum system in Panama](#) and assist with refugee status applications.

In Darien, UNHCR trained [38 SNM recruits](#) on the Agency's mandate and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention. UNHCR's [protection monitoring exercise](#) in the ETRM Lajas Blancas reached [126 refugees and migrants](#).

In Chiriquí, UNHCR and NRC held a [community fair in David](#) and informed 30 people about Panama's asylum system and local integration opportunities. The Agency participated in a plenary session of the Commission for the Protection and Assistance of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations ([COPPAMI](#)) and shared updates on its activities.









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UNHCR's Projects in Emberaá-Wounaán indigenous territories

UNHCR trained ten community delegates from the Bajo Chiquito community in mapping techniques. The "Indigenous Women Mappers for the Environment" innovation project aims to involve Emberá-Wounaán delegates in finding solutions to environmental issues affecting their community through digital technology and mapping exercises. Also, in Bajo Chiquito, UNHCR is developing a recreational area to promote psychosocial well-being and peaceful coexistence between people in transit and the host community.

In collaboration with the Ombudsperson's Office, Cisco Emergency and Ericsson, UNHCR is implementing a [VSAT project](#) in the indigenous communities of Bajo Chiquito, Canaán Membrillo, and Alto Playona. The initiative provides communication networks via satellite, guaranteeing equitable access to Internet services.

Key Achievements

-  UNHCR provided **7,151** people in transit with information on [journey risks](#) in the ETRMs and other reception points in Darien and Chiriquí.
-  UNHCR and NRC provided **5,704** people with [information on the asylum system](#) and assisted six people with their asylum applications in border areas.
-  UNHCR, through the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), provided [primary health care](#) to **391** refugees and migrants at the Government's ETRMs.
-  UNHCR's [Help Page](#) registered **11,118** visits and 8 people contacted UNHCR through its Chatbot.
-  UNHCR donated **228** digital thermometers and **100** mosquito nets to CRP to support the humanitarian and health response in Darién.
-  In May, through social media campaign, Confía en el Tucán, UNHCR released **16** social media posts. This month, the campaign reached **1,550,455** visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with **39,076** engagements.



For more information on protection mechanisms and the asylum system in Panama, please contact us here!

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