



400

refugees and asylum-seekers received legal assistance and counselling to access asylum and rights.



593

people were informed about the asylum system, access to essential services, and UNHCR's mandate.



626

mental health consultations were provided.



©UNHCR- Refugees participate in a joint visit to the ITSE.

Situation

Panama introduced new institutional and policy measures for border security, while continuing to engage in regional dialogue on displacement and international cooperation. In April, the Ministry of Public Security adopted a new **protocol** for land migration control posts, standardizing procedures for irregular entry, transit, and stay, and strengthening identification, registration, and administrative review mechanisms. This came amid continued movements, including reverse flows from Central America toward South America, though at levels well below the peak registered through Darién in previous years. Authorities maintained border monitoring and control measures, while humanitarian actors continued to assist people in transit.

In May, **Executive Decree No. 8** established a 30-day Temporary Transit Regime for certain third-country nationals included in international repatriation programmes. The decree sets out procedures for accommodation, transfer, and humanitarian assistance for this group, stating that transfers will be conducted in line with international obligations, including the principle of non-refoulement.

The quarter also brought important institutional developments. Former Supreme Court Magistrate Ángela Russo was elected **Ombudsperson**. In June, Panama hosted the fifty-sixth Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly, reaffirming its role in regional dialogue on democracy and human rights. At the **Assembly**, Member States adopted the **Panama Declaration** and addressed key regional situations, including Haiti, Nicaragua, and Bolivia. Panama was also elected to chair the OAS Committees on Hemispheric Security and on Migration Affairs, highlighting its growing role in regional discussions on displacement and refugee protection.

Highlights

The National Commission for the Protection of Refugees (CONARE) met twice, granting refugee status to 35 people from Colombia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. As of June, Panama hosted 2,733 recognized refugees. In its capacity as technical commissioner, UNHCR provided legal and technical support for case assessment and the application of international refugee protection standards.

UNHCR met with the Specialized Higher Technical Institute (ITSE) to discuss initiatives that help refugees access technical education, skills training, and micro-credentials, and to strengthen employability and self-reliance opportunities. In June, 10 refugees attended an open fair at the institution and received information on academic programmes and admission pathways, enabling them to apply for the August/September intake.

The Agency participated in the **Afro-Latin Caribbean Youth Congress** in Colón province, as a panelist and facilitator for discussions on forced displacement. A young refugee shared his experience and advocated for inclusion. The final Declaration included a provision on refugee youth,

In Darién and Chiriquí provinces, UNHCR strengthened coordination and referral pathways with national counterparts, including the Ombudsperson's Office, and the National Migration Service (SNM). In Darién, UNHCR accompanied the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) in delivering 30 permanent residency resolutions to long-term refugees, part of an ongoing process benefiting approximately 200 refugees.

UNHCR led a technical briefing on international protection for 50 representatives from banking and financial institutions to improve access to financial services for refugees and people at risk of statelessness. The Agency also trained the National Association of Human Resources Professionals of Panama (ANREH) on inclusive hiring, reaching staff from some 20 companies.

UNHCR and Fundación Estudio TAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding to support refugee training and employability. Eleven refugees completed a customer service course, undertook store internships, and joined a recruitment pool. Estudio TAC works to reduce employment barriers for vulnerable youth, running fashion retail programmes accredited by the Ministry of Education that prepare candidates for roles aligned with companies such as Zara, Stradivarius, and Pull&Bear.

Operational overview

Since 2004, UNHCR has worked alongside national authorities, civil society, and the private sector to strengthen protection and solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, and those at risk of statelessness. The Agency supports the national asylum system, expands opportunities for economic inclusion, and advances self-reliance among groups under mandate. It partners with the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP), HIAS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and the Pastoral for Human Mobility (PMH), and maintains MoUs with key stakeholders to foster inclusion and integration. Since September 2025, the UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) based in Panama has expanded its area of responsibility to 22 countries and territories across the region, primarily in the Caribbean.



UNHCR and 'HechoXRefugiados', Panama's first registered refugee-led and women organization, signed a Letter of Understanding to promote refugee entrepreneurship and socio-economic integration.



Refugees gain on the job experience with leading retail companies in Panama as part of UNHCR-Fundación Estudio TAC MoU. The foundation supports social impact initiatives by INDITEX Group, a leader in the fashion retail industry.



Useful links

- The National Commission for Refugee Protection (CONARE) reviews asylum applications and advances integration processes.
- Ombudsperson's Office and UNHCR Monitor Reception and Protection Conditions in Darién province.

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