

# Mixed Movements Darién

November 2022

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Drone Picture – Canaán Membrillo

## Context

After reaching the **highest peak** of people in mixed movements entering irregularly through Darien in **October (59,773)**<sup>1</sup>, in **November** the total crossings registered dropped by **almost three quarters compared to the numbers of the previous month (16,632)**<sup>2</sup>. Different factors, including the **harsh weather conditions** due to the rainy season and **the U.S. new migration policies for Venezuelans**, a measure that made people who entered irregularly through Mexico or Panama after 19 October ineligible for parole, contributed to this diminution.

Nevertheless, the situation of the mixed movement occurring throughout the region remains a concern. In Panama, **Ecuadorians, Haitians and extra-continental** people are now surpassing Venezuelans in their daily entries, even though those still **represent the majority of people crossing irregularly in 2022** (148,953)<sup>3</sup>. As of 30 November 2022, 227,9874 refugees and migrants have entered irregularly through Darien, of which almost **22,000 are Ecuadorians and 17,000 Haitians**. In November alone, 6,350 Ecuadorians and 4,607 Haitians were registered in transit, while **the number of Venezuelans dropped to 668 people crossing**. It is noteworthy to report that in November **Indians were also among the largest groups**, with 723 people in transit.

The latest UNHCR monthly protection monitoring exercise<sup>5</sup> evidenced that, an increasing number of people interviewed indicated their will to stay in the country (10 per cent). Additionally, **4 out of 10** people interviewed left their country of origin due to **personal or family threats**, as well as **generalized violence**, and around **46 per cent** fled due to fear of **violence and general insecurity**, reflecting an increase in the protection needs of these groups, a trend that has been noticed by UNHCR since the last month.

## UNHCR's Response

### PROTECTION

In November, UNHCR signed an agreement with the Ombudsman's Office **to set up the UNHCR office adjacent to the Defensor's**. UNHCR in Darien focuses on community-based protection, information management, shelter, and communication with communities to support existing **protection services and monitoring exercises** at the Migratory Reception Centres and host communities, including in remote indigenous areas.

Together with partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR provided information on the asylum system in Panama in border areas and assisted some **40 people** with their **refugee status application**. Moreover, UNHCR through partner HIAS, provided **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** related to traumatic experiences during the jungle crossing, and continued informing people in transit, in both Darién and Chiriquí provinces on the **risks of the route** through **informative sessions**.

In November, UNHCR conducted a **monitoring mission** to the **ERM Los Planes de Gualaca** in Chiriquí to evaluate the conditions of this Migratory Reception Centre at the border with Costa Rica, as the authorities transferred the Venezuelans stranded in the Panama City temporary shelter (**Viejo Veranillo**) to this location.



<sup>1</sup> National Migration Service [https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2022/PDF/IRREGULARES\\_%20POR\\_%20DARIÉN\\_NOVIEMBRE\\_2022.pdf](https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2022/PDF/IRREGULARES_%20POR_%20DARIÉN_NOVIEMBRE_2022.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid <sup>3</sup> Ibid <sup>4</sup> Ibid <sup>5</sup> Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97645>



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## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

In November, UNHCR and partner Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) provided primary health care to approximate **750 people in mixed movements** (424 men, 325 women, and 248 children) at the ERMs of San Vicente and Lajas Blancas in Darién, as well as at Los Planes de Gualaca in Chiriquí. The Agency also distributed **293 nutritional kits** for children with nutrition deficiencies.

UNHCR attended meetings with the National Migration Service and the Human Mobility Group in Darien to define the coordination efforts for the provision of **international protection and humanitarian assistance** in the new modular complex in the ERM San Vicente. UNHCR helped in the dismantling of the remaining seven Refugee Housing Units (RHU) in the ERM, with the purpose of replacing them with **open tents** to guarantee **better security standards**.

### Key Achievements

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 In November, UNHCR and partner HIAS, reached out to approximately **950 people** with information on the journey risks (over **900** in the ERMs and reception points in Darién and **46** in Chiriquí).
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 UNHCR and its partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provided information to over **130 people on the asylum system in Panama**, and some **40** were assisted with their asylum application.
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 Since its launch in the last weeks of October, **60 people reached out to UNHCR through its Chatbot** asking for information on asylum applications, resettlement, gender-based violence prevention, among others protection concerns.
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 In November, through UNHCR and its partner Panamanian Red Cross, nearly **750 people** received **primary health care** and **first aid** (508 in ERMs in Darien and 241 in ERM Los Planes de Gualaca, in Chiriquí).
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 UNHCR **protection monitoring exercise** in the Migratory Reception Centres of San Vicente and Lajas Blancas, as well as in other reception points in Darien, reached an approximate of **100** refugees and migrants.
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 UNHCR provided **interpretation services** on the available facilities at the ERMs San Vicente and Lajas Blancas in Darien, as well as on processes with authorities to 21 Afghans, 5 Sri Lankas, 4 Mauritians, 3 Chinese, 1 Syrian, 1 Egyptian, and 1 Lebanese.
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 UNHCR and partner HIAS assisted over **600 people** with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) related to traumatic experiences crossing the jungle in the Migratory Reception Centres and other reception points in both Darién (86 people) and Chiriquí (526 people).



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 unearmarked donors in 2022



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