



# Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí

July 2023

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## Context

In July, the record number of people who crossed the Darién jungle in 2022<sup>1</sup> was surpassed. As of 31 July 2023<sup>2</sup>, **251,758 people** had crossed, exposing themselves to multiple dangers in their search for protection and a better future.

This month, authorities registered the highest number of irregular entries in 2023 (**55,387 people**), marking the second-highest monthly entry in Panama's history, only surpassed by October 2022's figures. Furthermore, the National Migration Service (SNM) registered **13,958 women and 12,602 children** and adolescents crossing the Darién in July, the highest recorded for these groups.

UNHCR keeps observing protection gaps and needs among those in transit in its monthly protection monitoring exercise<sup>3</sup>. **One out of seven** interviewed left their country of origin due to **threats or attacks directed** against them or their families. Around **49 per cent** fled due to **fear of violence and general insecurity** in their country, and **31 per cent** reported being victims of **theft, scam, or fraud** during the journey through the jungle. Almost half of those interviewed reported they might face risks if they had to return to their country of origin or residence.

On 13 July, the Ministry of Public Security released **Executive Decree No. 112**<sup>4</sup>, which created a temporary residency status called "Temporary Protection Permit." The permit is available to all foreigners who entered Panama irregularly and have stayed in the country for at least one year without starting a regularization procedure. It requires the presentation of personal documentation and payment fees of up to US\$950 for adults and US\$700 for children. The procedure is available until 19 July 2024, granting temporary residency for two years. During its first week, over **4,000** people applied.

## UNHCR's Response

### PROTECTION

UNHCR **supports the State's response** at the Temporary Reception Centres (ETRM) and host communities in Darién and Chiriquí. Through a permanent presence and regular monitoring exercises, the Agency offers legal support to people with protection needs, referring individuals who require specialized assistance to the relevant institutions. 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**.

In July, UNHCR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Civil Registry trained **72 government officials** in Chiriquí on international protection and statelessness prevention.

UNHCR protection monitoring exercise in the ETRMs of San Vicente, Lajas Blancas, and Los Planes de Gualaca, as well as in other reception points, reached **over 110 refugees and migrants**. In Lajas Blancas, UNHCR conducted five focus group discussions. Nearly 100 people participated in the sessions.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES\\_POR\\_DARIEN\\_DICIEMBRE\\_2022.pdf](https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_POR_DARIEN_DICIEMBRE_2022.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES\\_%20POR\\_%20DARIEN\\_JULIO\\_2023.pdf](https://www.migracion.gob.pa/images/img2023/pdf/IRREGULARES_%20POR_%20DARIEN_JULIO_2023.pdf) <sup>3</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102887>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.pa/pdfTemp/29824\\_B/99543.pdf](https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.pa/pdfTemp/29824_B/99543.pdf)



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## LOCAL INTEGRATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UNHCR training for the Agency’s community delegates programme in the indigenous communities of Canaán-Membrillo, Bajo Chiquito, and Alto Playona continues. This second phase consists of an **eight-month series** focused on international protection and access to fundamental rights, project management, community engagement, accountability strategies, and community-based solutions. Over **25 women**, including refugees integrated in these communities, are participating.

As part of its Refugee Housing Units (RHU) project in Alto Playona, UNHCR has trained **19 locals** on RHUs assembly techniques. As of 31 July, community members have assembled **15 housing units** employing the tactics the Agency shared. Alto Playona has traditionally protected and integrated refugees and currently hosts some 18 refugee families (50 people), many of whom have been there for over 18 years.

### Key Achievements

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  - UNHCR and NRC provided information to some **1,050 people** on the asylum system in Panama and assisted two people at border points with their asylum application.
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  - UNHCR, through CRP, provided primary health care to **2,121 refugees and migrants** at the Government’s temporary reception centers in Darien and Chiriquí.
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  - UNHCR reached out to over **1,450 people** with information on the journey risks in the ETRMs and reception points in Darién and Chiriquí.
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  - UNHCR trained 72 government officials on international protection and statelessness prevention.
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  - UNHCR Panama’s **Help Page** registered **23,040 visits**, and nearly **360 people** contacted UNHCR through the Agency’s **Chatbot**.
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  - Through its social media campaign “**Confía en el Tucán**”, and since April 2023, UNHCR has released **121** digital publications, reaching **1,096,325 visualizations** on TikTok and Facebook, with **35,618 engagements** as of 31 July 2023.



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 unarmarked donors in 2023



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