

The Operational Realities Behind Our 2025 Work

In a year of major **operational changes** and a complex protection landscape, UNHCR's Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama adjusted its approach and its presence amid rising regional needs and **funding gaps**. By August, the Agency had gradually closed its offices in Aruba, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago, and reduced its footprint in Belize and Panama. In September, as part of the restructuring, the **MCO expanded its geographic coverage** to 22 countries, adding oversight of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and other States in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean region.

Throughout this transition, political, legal, and socioeconomic pressures continued to shape access to safety, documentation, and basic rights. UNHCR worked with authorities, partners, and communities to prevent service gaps and sustain essential protection and solutions responses.

MCO Panama Population Figures

- As of 30 June 2025, nearly 100,000 people under UNHCR's mandate were hosted in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
 - Most were refugees, asylum-seekers and others forcibly displaced.
 - Around 1,000 were stateless persons or those at risk of it.



Protection and Solutions: Which milestones made a difference this year?

Despite ongoing challenges, significant gains strengthened protection across MCO Panama's coverage area. In the Caribbean, judicial rulings arising from existing legal proceedings reinforced safeguards, preventing the deportation of asylum-seekers during appeals in Aruba and limiting detention for irregular entry in Curaçao.

In Belize, applying the expanded refugee definition under the Cartagena Declaration improved access to protection for Haitians, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans. In Panama, the **restoration of the asylum-seekers' ID-issuance system** for the first time since 2021 allowed over 1,500 people to obtain a temporary asylum-seeker identification card, which confirms the processing of their claim and enables access to essential services.

Across the MCO's coverage, nearly 800 people secured civil documentation with UNHCR support, helping prevent statelessness and exploitation. In Belize, as of 2025, more than 500 asylum-seekers have obtained permanent residency through the **Amnesty Programme**, including 67 supported with ID-issuance costs this year. Refugees also saw gains in health access and social inclusion, while almost 300 of the most vulnerable were approved for resettlement, with 288 departing from Aruba, Cuba, Curaçao, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago.


¹As part of a transition in coverage, the implementation figures presented in this report reflect only MCO Panama's previous area of responsibility: Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. For information on the expanded coverage area, please visit: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mcopenama>


Behind Progress: UNHCR's Contribution


UNHCR's sustained advocacy, technical support, and material assistance contributed to this year's legal and integration progress. Across the region, the Agency promoted protection-sensitive approaches to basic assistance, enabling over 9,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and other vulnerable people to access health services and basic needs support. Following Hurricane Melissa in Cuba, UNHCR helped deliver lifesaving assistance to 8,000 people as part of a broader UN response reaching 32,000. To reduce risks of violence against women and girls, the Agency strengthened first responders' [capacities](#) and improved access to protection services for over 1,300 people.


UNHCR supported integration through language training for 141 refugees and asylum-seekers in Aruba and Cuba, as well as livelihoods programmes in Panama that equipped nearly 200 people with specialized skills. [Partnerships](#) with [ManpowerGroup](#), [Clandestino Lab](#), and [30+ companies through the launch of 'Empresas con Refugiados' Forum](#) expanded employment pathways for refugees. Also in Panama, UNHCR's [Cybersecurity Innovation Project](#) supported 10 refugee champions who trained 150 refugees and host community members in digital safety. UNHCR supported the legal formalization of the first Central American [refugee women-led group](#) focused on promoting livelihoods (Hecho x Refugiados) into a registered foundation, and amplified refugee voices through the ['Con Amor Desde Panamá'](#) campaign and the ['Puentes de Esperanza'](#) performance during [World Refugee Day](#). In the last quarter, UNHCR's oversight in the Caribbean improved protection responses in [Haiti](#) and the [Dominican Republic](#), and enabled close collaboration with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).


Our response at a glance²


 +8,850 Refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community members received non-food items.

 6,276 People informed on protection rights, access to essential services, and sensitized on international protection.

 3,067 People received counselling and legal assistance to access asylum and rights.

 +3,000 forcibly displaced people supported with health services.

 +1,500 Officials trained in international protection standards and statelessness prevention.

 776 People supported in acquiring documentation, including permanent residency permits.

Looking Ahead: Lessons That Shaped Our 2026 Priorities

It continues to be evident that integration works best when regularization and asylum systems are easy to navigate and people feel supported throughout the process. Efforts across the region showed how clearer information and capacity-building make a meaningful difference for those seeking protection. As UNHCR gradually reduces its footprint, the Agency emphasized the importance of working closely with authorities, UN partners, civil society, private sector and other actors to ensure no one is left behind.

Across the region, inclusive approaches, paired with trusted partnerships, complementary pathways, and [private-sector engagement](#), helped broaden opportunities for vulnerable groups. Persistent gaps in access to asylum and solutions highlighted the need to further embed protection into national systems. These lessons shape UNHCR's 2026 focus: strengthening government engagement, expanding safe access to territory, improving documentation, and advancing durable solutions.



²Figures reflect implementation in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Voices and Journeys That Inspired Us: Get to Know More of Our Most Meaningful Stories from 2025

With Love, From Panama



Belize: A place to call home



T&T: A Chance to Learn



Thank you to Our Donors and Partners Who Made This Work Possible

Every step forward this year, every person protected, documented, or supported, was made possible thanks to your steadfast commitment to stateless and forcibly displaced people. Your generosity and collaboration strengthened our response and helped extend safety, dignity, and hope across the region. As needs continue to grow, your partnership remains essential. Thank you for your continued support of our mandate to protect and ensure that every person forced to flee has the chance to rebuild their future in safety. For a closer look at how your support is changing lives and strengthening protection across the region, [please click here](#).



And private donors in Italy, the Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Australia for UNHCR, the Dutch Postcode Lottery, España con ACNUR, Japan for UNHCR, Sweden for UNHCR, UK for UNHCR and UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe.

For more information and updates, please stay connected through our [Data Portal](#), [X](#), and [TikTok](#).

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