REFUGEE INCLUSION IN THE LABOR MARKET

MCO PANAMA
2026

FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN BELIZE

- **Nearly 400 recognized** refugees
- **Around 200 asylum-seekers** per year
- **700 asylum-seekers** supported by UNHCR were able to apply for permanent residence through the amnesty program during 2022–2025 – over 12K amnesty recipients.

- Refugees and asylum-seekers come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, representing a wide range of educational levels and professional experiences.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers strive for stability and long-term integration in host countries, contributing socially and economically as they rebuild their lives.
- In Belize, forcibly displaced people live in urban and rural areas (mainly in Belize city, Cayo, and Toledo Districts).

MAIN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

EL SALVADOR

HONDURAS

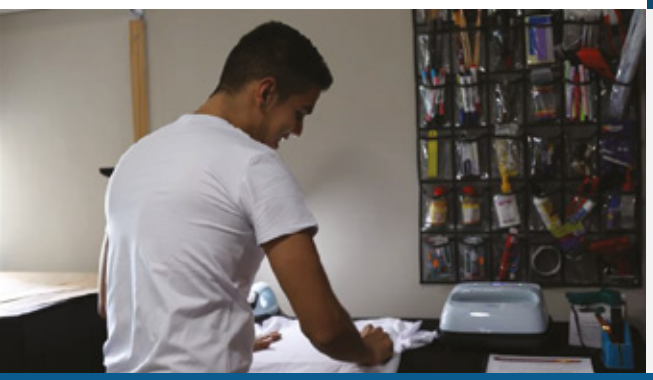
GUATEMALA

NICARAGUA

FORCED DISPLACEMENT ≠ MIGRATION

Refugees flee because their life, liberty, or safety is at risk; while migrants leave their country for reasons such as work, studies, or family reunification, having the opportunity to return.

ASYLUM SEEKERS	"Asylum-seeker" is a person who applied for asylum with the Refugees Department of the Ministry of Immigration of Belize.
REFUGEES	"Refugee" is a person who has been recognised as a refugee in line with the Refugees Act of Belize.
PERMANENT RESIDENTS	Through the 2022 Amnesty Program, thousands of people, including registered asylum seekers, gained a pathway to permanent residence, allowing them to live without fear of deportation and access documentation, work, and other rights and services.



BENEFITS FROM THE INCLUSION OF REFUGEES AND PERMANENT RESIDENTS IN THE LABOR MARKET

Corporate Social Responsibility through inclusive practices.

Adaptability and resilience.

Increased productivity through workplace diversity, stimulate innovation and problem-solving, encourage knowledge sharing, enhance learning opportunities.

Lower turnover costs – committed and stable workers.

Contribution to the national economy through integration into the formal labor market → tax revenues from formal employment + higher local demand (housing, goods and services).

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM COMPANIES

EMPLOYMENT
Formal employment opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees who meet the requirements.

VALUE CHAINS
Support for asylum-seeker and refugee entrepreneurs through the inclusion of their products or services in the value chains of companies.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
Strengthening skills and abilities for strategic integration into the labor market.

PRIVATE SECTOR NETWORK AND GOOD PRACTICES
Raising awareness among other companies and showcasing good practices that promote inclusion.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN BELIZE

REQUIREMENTS	ASYLUM-SEEKERS	REFUGEES	PERMANENT RESIDENTS (AMNESTY)
LEGAL RESTRICTION	No legal right to work.	Full working rights once Social Security # has been obtained.	Full working rights once Social Security # has been obtained.
IDENTITY DOCUMENT	No document issued.	Refugee Card issued by Refugees Department (SS card also required for formal employment).	Permanent Residence card issued by the Ministry of Immigration (SS card also required for formal employment).
WORK PERMIT	N/A	Social Security cards valid for three years, with ability to renew.	Social Security cards valid for three years with ability to renew.
SOCIAL SECURITY	N/A	Employers register employees on fixed-term contracts with the Social Security Board, enabling access to all benefits on par with nationals.	Employers register employees with fixed-term contracts with the Social Security Board, enabling access to all benefits on par with nationals.

CALL FOR INCLUSIVE POLICIES

- "With the appropriate policies and resources, integration can contribute to the development of host countries and the wellbeing of their communities." Inter-American Development Bank

  VISIT IDB WEBSITE

- "A growing body of evidence shows refugees contribute to communities. With inclusive policies and opportunities to become self reliant, refugees can drive economic growth, enhance public finances, and create more dynamic labour markets." UNHCR

  DOWNLOAD FACTSHEET

For more information, please contact the Sustainable Responses Unit at panpa-sru@unhcr.org

THE UNHCR MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE IN PANAMA WISHES TO EXPRESS SPECIAL THANKS TO ITS DONORS:

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