Panama Multi-Country Office

Monthly Operational Update

Regional Context

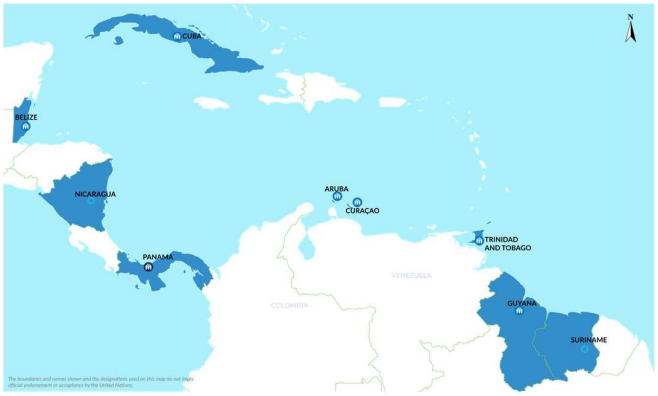
Countries under **UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama** were affected by environmental phenomena as well as regional regulatory changes, that intensified the already complex situations of refugees, asylum-seekers and people on the move.

In **Suriname**, exchange rate fluctuations worsened the socio-economic crisis and unrest across the country, as the average rate for one US dollar rose to 30 Surinamese dollars. This situation further limited the capacity of the population to meet basic needs, especially for refugees and asylum seekers. At the border, the Government declared the irregular crossing known as the "back-track route", as official, deploying police, migration, and customs officers to the area.

In **Guyana**, the precarious living conditions, as well as water, sanitation, and food needs affect the safety of refugees and other vulnerable groups. In mining areas, also affected by dire economic conditions, the engagement of women in survival sex continues to heighten the risk of violence and exploitation. Reports of discrimination against sex workers at hospitals and health facilities continue to be registered, in addition to alarming child protection concerns in hard-to-reach areas of Regions 1 and 8, where children are at risk of exclusion from education programmes and early pregnancy.

In **Aruba**, debate surrounding reports of human rights violations by government officials persist, with concerns by national and international organizations regarding isolation conditions in detention centers, lack of access to basic needs, and mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees. In **Curaçao**, unlawful detention orders continued to be issued.

In **Belize**, some 30 communities and approximately 3,000 families were impacted by flooding and rains associated with hurricane Julia, requiring the opening of more than 11 shelters throughout the country.



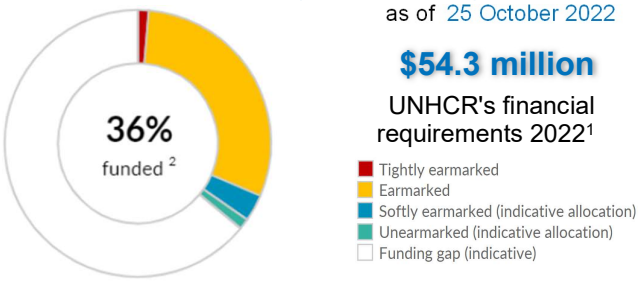
In **Cuba**, with a weakened national electric system, maintenance works continued to reconnect the most affected territories from hurricane Ian. Adverse weather conditions affected territories in **Trinidad and Tobago**, with heavy rains and flooding around the capital.

In **Panama**, during the first two weeks of October, some 2,000 to 3,000 persons in mixed movements were crossing the Darien daily, with Venezuelans representing 70 per cent of the total. However, since the announcement by the United States, regarding new migration policies for Venezuelans, the trend drastically changed, with an average of 600 persons arriving per day in the last week of October. Ecuadorians and Haitians in transit now surpass the daily number of Venezuelans and those stranded in the country were relocated to Migratory Reception Centres and temporary shelters, where protection needs are assessed, and humanitarian assistance is provided.

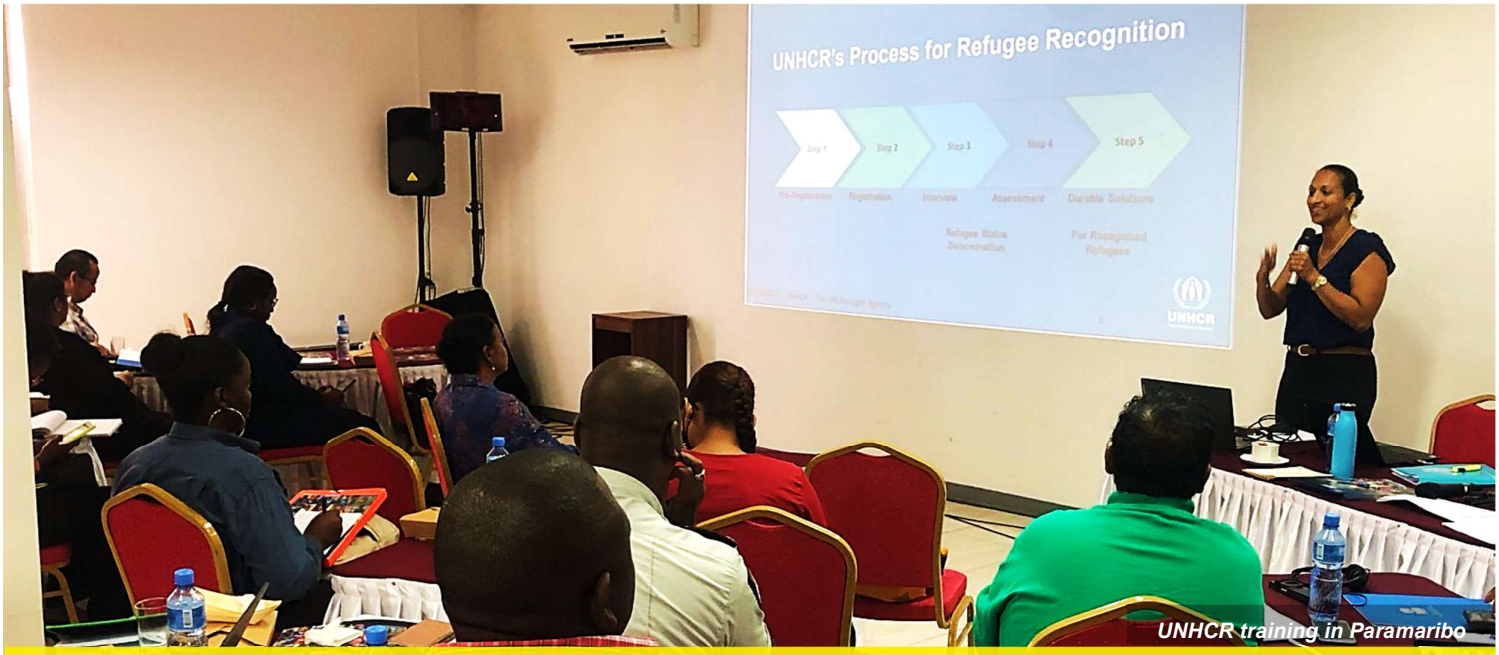
MCO Panama requires USD 54.3M to continue to assist, and secure solutions in the subregion.

See more here on how you can support UNHCR and the forcibly displaced.

Regional funding Overview
as of 25 October 2022



[1] Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2022 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname,** and **Trinidad and Tobago.**
[2] The percentage funded is indicative.



UNHCR training in Paramaribo

UNHCR's Response:

Updates on Country Activities

Coordination and Strengthening of Local and National Governments

- In **Suriname**, UNHCR conducted a two-day workshop on refugee and international protection for 30 Government officers in Paramaribo, including members of the Border Control, Police Office, Immigration Department, and diverse Ministries.
- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR and HIAS co-facilitated a GBV Case Management Training for 11 officers of the Victim Support Unit (Stichting Slachtofferhulp Curaçao).
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR conducted a workshop for 15 members of the Police Service on international refugee law.

Protection (including community-based protection and gender-based violence)

- In **Panama,** UNHCR protection monitoring exercises in the Migratory Reception Centers (ERMs) of San Vicente and Lajas Blancas, as well as in other reception points in Darien, reached a total of 160 refugee and migrant households. UNHCR conducted training on international protection for seven NGO members working with the Pastoral Network in Panama.
- In **Belize**, UNHCR assisted 155 asylum seekers and other vulnerable persons in their application for the Government's Amnesty, through informative sessions and mobile clinics.
- In **Guyana**, UNHCR registered 278 people, counselled 170, and accompanied 50 persons to government services. Through Guyana Sex Work Coalition (GSWC), UNHCR held knowledge-sharing sessions on sexual reproductive health with 52 sex workers, 98 sex workers attended support group sessions, and 53 accessed HIV testing. The agency also supported 12 children with enrolment documentation and provided community and after-school classes to 521 children.
- In **Curaçao**, UNHCR conducted a workshop for over 40 community volunteers called *"leave no one behind"* to raise awareness in identifying, preventing, and responding to protection cases involving refugees and other vulnerable groups.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR together with the Family Planning Association, facilitated a session for 56 asylum seekers and refugees on legal procedures and UNHCR's mandate.

Humanitarian Assistance

- In **Guyana**, UNHCR distributed sleeping mats, jerry cans, mosquito nets, hygiene kits, baby kits, food baskets, and tents to some 670 beneficiaries and provided cash assistance to over 100 persons.
- In **Cuba**, amid the situation caused by hurricane Ian, UNHCR received a total of 23,400 solar lamps and 180 tents for distribution among the population in the most affected areas in Pinar del Río.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR distributed 80 food bags and 30 menstrual pads each to some 300 people and handed 65 core relief items (CRIs) and 58 food hampers to partner La Casita.

Livelihoods and Commnunity-engagement

- In **Belize**, UNHCR and HUMANA People to People, hosted welding courses for 34 persons and assisted eight others with materials to start their small businesses. The agency also delivered two public information sessions on international protection for 70 students at the University of Belize to explain the work of UNHCR.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR HIAS, and ManPower Group carried out two employability training workshops for the second group of Talent Without Borders programme participants. A total of 35 people enhanced their skills and improved their job search through strategies given in the workshops.

Stories from the Field

Going the extra mile for education in Yarakita

Close to the Venezuelan border, in the remote village of Yarakita, Region 1, Guyana, Francisco works daily to ensure access to education for refugees, migrants, and Warao children waiting for a space to be enrolled in the government school.

Over the past 10 months, Francisco has been volunteering with UNHCR in this community, supporting at least 56 out-of-school children with community-based English classes as a Second Language (ESL). With the help of Francisco, at least 30 of them have been able to integrate into the English-based Guyanese Education System, and all his students can now communicate in basic English, further helping their parents to improve communications with other community members and schoolteachers.

Even when the weather is adverse, he starts his day with a 35-minute canoe journey, for a further 25 minute walk to the classroom. “I understand their hardships and risks, and I want to be someone that eases their daily adversities. This is where I find my motivation and working with UNHCR gives me the chance to support these children in ways I wouldn’t be able to on my own”.

Francisco works in close collaboration with other volunteers, and his work goes beyond the English classes since he also renders his service to the community addressing child protection matters and livelihood activities of vulnerable groups.

UNHCR’s Multi-Country Office in Panama thanks the contributions from our direct and unearmarked donors in 2022:

Australian Aid | With funding from Austrian Development Cooperation | Belgium partner in development | Canada | Irish Aid Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland | From the People of Japan | Cooperación Española | Unión Europea | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC | UKaid | ONUSIDA

Private donors including those in Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States

For more information | Philippa Candler, Representative at candler@unhcr.org | Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso, Associate Communications Officer at bruttome@unhcr.org
For media interviews | panpamedia@unhcr.org **Follow us on Facebook** | UNHCR Caribbean