

Panama Multi-Country Office

Monthly Operational Update

Regional Context

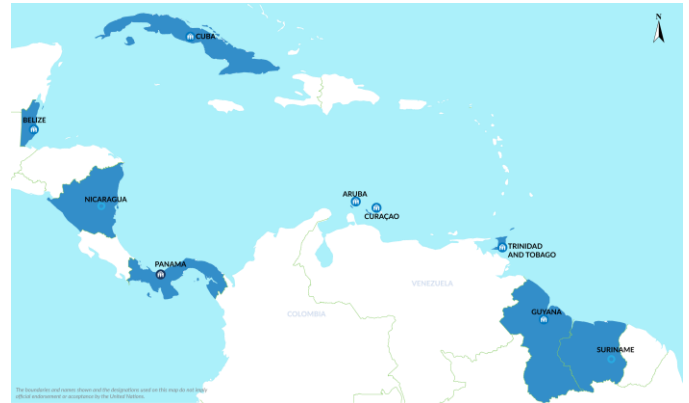
Although countries under **UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama** continued to face challenges and complex situations involving refugees, asylum seekers and others on the move, in November positive developments in governmental policies were registered, serving as path to guarantee vulnerable groups UNHCR serves access to essential rights.

In **Aruba**, UNHCR keeps receiving reports of deteriorating conditions in detention centres and difficulties legal counsels face to properly assist the people the Agency protects. In **Curacao**, the house of Representatives in the Netherlands adopted a **motion to improve the provision of technical assistance for the protection of refugees living in the island**, which aims to enforce the international standards described in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

In **Belize**, category 1 Hurricane Julia hit the country, causing widespread flooding, particularly in Belize City. Authorities estimated that some 200 families were displaced, and nearly 300 people required shelter support.

In **Cuba**, diplomatic officers held bilateral discussions with the United States, to review the implementation of the agreements on safe, regular, and humane migration. The meeting was preceded by the 3 November **United Nations General Assembly Resolution**, that **recognized for the thirtieth time, the need to end the United States embargo against Cuba**.

In **Suriname**, among ongoing strikes and protests within the country, exchange rates kept increasing, exacerbating insecurity in the country. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, there were an increasing number of reports on the rise of criminal activities, particularly affecting vulnerable groups UNHCR serves.



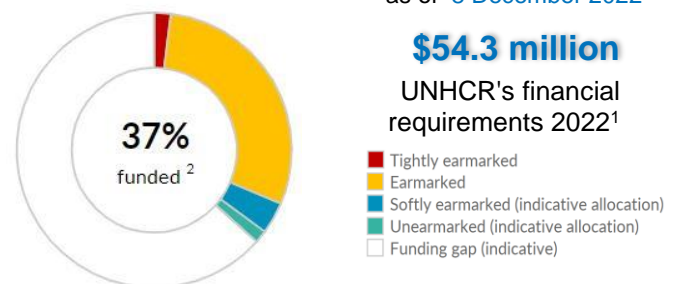
In **Guyana**, UNHCR is receiving reports of labour exploitation and discrimination of displaced persons within the host communities, as well as dehydration and malnutrition, particularly among indigenous groups living in hard-to-reach areas. The Government announced the allocation of **\$10 million to conduct consultations on the amendments of the Amerindian Act**, as well a **US\$43 million loan for the development of a project to strengthen Guyana's Education Sector**.

In **Panamá**, 16,632 people crossed irregularly through Darien, representing a reduction of almost three quarters of the total who crossed in October. On 25 November, **the Government inaugurated the new modular complex of the San Vicente Migratory Reception Centre**, a venue equipped with 544 beds, water tank, medical station, among others.

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 8 December 2022



¹ Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2022 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curacao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago**.

² The percentage funded is indicative.



UNHCR's Response: Updates on Country Activities

In Panama, UNHCR participated in a march organized by the National Institution for Women (INAMU) to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.



Coordination and Strengthening of Local and National Governments

- In **Aruba**, UNHCR participated in a meeting of the recently established **Bar Association Committee for Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants**, and briefed the members on the asylum procedure.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a meeting with the Panamanian authorities for the creation of an Interinstitutional Commission for the Implementation of the **Decree on Statelessness** and conducted a training on this procedure for some **30 officers** of various institutions, including the National Migration Service, and the Electoral Tribunal.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR facilitated a workshop on **international refugee protection** for **25 members** of the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service.



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

- In **Belize**, UNHCR assisted **251 asylum seekers and other vulnerable persons** in their application for the Government's Amnesty, through informative sessions and mobile clinics. The Agency issued cash-based assistance to some **88 vulnerable asylum seekers** in order to help them cover for the cost of documentation to complete the process.
- In **Curacao**, UNHCR and partners launched an Inter-agency Child Protection Assessment, with trained on how to conduct child-friendly interviews. Around **30 children participated** in the first **focus group discussions**.
- In **Panama**, 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**.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR registered **527 individuals** (392 Venezuelan and 100 asylum seekers of other nationalities, as well as 35 other vulnerable people). A total of **261 people** were enrolled in UNHCR's Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) and received an identification card.



Humanitarian Assistance

- In **Cuba**, UNHCR distributed over **60 food hampers**, reaching over **100 vulnerable families**, and handed out nearly **150 core-relief items (CRIs)**, including solar lamps, mosquito nets and sleeping mats, to refugees and asylum seekers.
- In **Guyana**, UNHCR distributed over **80 food hampers**, and more than **200 CRIs**, including **115 sanitation items** to some **100 refugee and vulnerable families**. The Agency and public health workers conducted a mission in Anabisi, Region 1, vaccinating some **45 people** against papillomavirus (HPV), diphtheria and tetanus (DT), yellow fever, and tuberculosis (BCG).



Livelihoods and Community-engagement

- In **Belize**, UNHCR and HUMANA People to People, hosted **welding courses** for **24 people** and conducted entrepreneurship and vocational training for **35 others**. The Agency provided three asylum seekers with materials for their **small businesses** and hosted a community outreach session during which five asylum seekers were assisted to create **social security portable accounts**.
- In **Panama**, **80 refugees** participated in the "**Ventajas**" workshop organized by UNHCR, which purpose was to encourage them to continue their pursue of a formal and dignified employment. A total of **267 Christmas items** from "**Hecho por refugiados**" (Made by refugees), a collective enterprise of more than **10 refugee women** supported by UNHCR, began to be delivered.



Advocacy

- UNHCR Trinidad and Tobago's short documentary "**The Challengers**" was screened as part of the **Courage Film Festival** in **Belin, Germany**.



Stories from the Field

"She's Gone" exhibition in Aruba, by Israeli artist Keren Goldstein.

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

In **Aruba**, UNHCR and partners invited the Israeli artist Keren Goldstein, to showcase her exhibit "**She's Gone**", an art installation that displays the **clothes of women victims of femicide**. Around **200 attendees** visited the art exhibition. In addition, UNHCR was invited to Tele Aruba to talk about the "She is gone" exhibition and gave two **radio interviews** to raise awareness on gender-based violence in the country. The Agency and the local organization *Fundación Contra Violencia Relacional (FCVR)* hosted "**Stop the Beating**", a theatre play on child abuse by the storyteller Archell Thompson.

In **Belize**, UNHCR held a psychosocial support session for **16 asylum seeker survivors** of GBV, as well as an open discussion where the attendants shared their experiences. The Agency also facilitated a training on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, and Harassment, for **25 staff members** of partner Humana People to People.

In **Curacao**, UNHCR, together with IOM and the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) organized a **Roundtable on Access to Justice for GBV survivors**, to serve as a platform for capacity building and collaboration with Governmental Institutions.

In **Guyana**, UNHCR and partners held an **interactive session** in Mabaruma to assess how cultural messages about gender affect human behavior in both men and women. The activity was followed by awareness sessions on gender equality and GBV prevention where some 40 women participated.

In **Panama**, UNHCR and partners organized a family fair under the theme "**Todos y todas podemos prevenir la violencia**" (Let's prevent gender-based violence all together). Aside from the informative stands, **10 refugees and asylum seekers entrepreneurs** displayed their products. UNHCR invited the community to write support messages on banners regarding gender-based violence prevention and refugee inclusion. Together with the Municipality of La Chorrera, partners, refugees, asylum seekers, and host community members, the Agency painted **three murals** to raise awareness about GBV with prevention messages and contact numbers to seek assistance.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR conducted a **sexual and reproductive health awareness campaign**, highlighting the risks refugees and other vulnerable groups face, due to their vulnerable status. The Agency distributed **kits with information** and reproductive health items and feature in a local newspaper with an interview on the importance of the condom negotiation. UNHCR and IOM, held the fifth installment of the **humanitarian breakfast** on Gender-Based Violence, with some **60 participants**, including government and diplomatic officials, humanitarian community, and online participants.

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



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