

# Panama

May-June 2023

## Key Figures

Over **13,000** Refugees and asylum-seekers live in Panama, mainly from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

**196,371** People crossed the Darien jungle between January and June in 2023, four times the number of those who arrived during the same period in 2022.

UNHCR donated **2,250** Mosquito nets to the National Migration Service (SNM) for distribution at Darien's Temporary Migratory Reception Centres (ETRM) and other reception points.

## Context

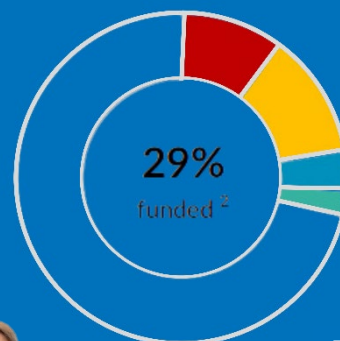
Following the significant escalation in mixed movements northwards, in May, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly Clements, visited Panama, and appealed for **urgent support** for Latin American and Caribbean countries, hosting most of the region's 20 million refugees and migrants. By the end of this month, and for the first time in 2023, the number of people crossing the jungle did not exceed the previous month's records.

As of 30 June, nearly 200,000 people had **crossed the Darien jungle** seeking protection and better life opportunities. The Director of the National Migration Service (SNM) stated that the country faces an unprecedented mixed movement crisis, and that from 2019 to date, the Government has spent over 65 million dollars in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter, and primary healthcare.

UNHCR provides technical support to government entities accountable for refugee protection, including the Ministry of Interior and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR).

In May, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly Clements, visited Panama. She met with authorities to discuss Panama's protection space and participated in **focus group discussions** and integration initiatives with refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Regional funding Overview as of 27 June, 2023



- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

**\$55.4 million**  
UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

<sup>1</sup> Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2023 including requirements for the operations and activities in Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded is indicative.

## UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR works closely with the Government, civil society, UN agencies, refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants in Panama. UNHCR and IOM co-chair the UN inter-agency group on human mobility, coordinating humanitarian support for mixed movements in Darien and Chiriquí. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), Fútbol con Corazón (FCC), HIAS, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) and the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH).



**Coordination with Local Authorities** | In the framework of World Refugee Day, UNHCR and the Ministry of Government organized a Regional Forum focused on the integration of refugees in the country. A total of 100 people attended the event, including 40 refugee entrepreneurs who showcased their products. Together with partner FEC, UNHCR presented a dance at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to sensitize attendees on the risks and threats asylum-seekers and refugees face in their search for safety by sea.



**Protection** | UNHCR together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Civil Registry Office, trained over 200 Police officers on international protection and statelessness prevention. UNHCR interviewed over 200 refugees and migrants during its monthly protection monitoring in Darien. Through its protection desk, UNHCR conducts confidential interviews at the ETRM Lajas Blancas, further assessing the protection needs of asylum-seekers hosted in this reception centre.



**Cash-Based Assistance (CBI)** | UNHCR, through CRP, HIAS and NRC, assisted 354 households with cash-based assistance for food, medicines, livelihoods, education, documentation, rent and temporary accommodation, reaching 840 people during May and June.



**Humanitarian Assistance** | UNHCR, through CRP, provided primary health care to over 8,574 refugees and migrants at Darien's ETRMs and Los Planes de Gualaca in Chiriquí.



**Local Integration** | UNHCR and the Key Communication for Social Innovation Group launched the second edition of the Youth Mentoring and Leadership Programme. Over 30 refugee, asylum-seeking, and local Brader School students, will be participating in working sessions to discuss social cohesion and local integration of forcibly displaced populations in Panama.



### **FAMILY FAIR COMMEMORATING THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY IN PANAMA**

UNHCR participated in the CRP's Family Fair for refugees and provided information on the asylum system in Panama, UNHCR's mandate, and GBV prevention to some 100 people. UNHCR's partners, UNFPA, the Ministry of Women and the Ombudsman Office also participated.

During the event, refugee and asylum-seeking students participating in UNHCR's Youth Mentoring and Leadership Programme organized a soccer tournament and storytelling activity for children.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America, the European Union, Guyana, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. We also thank the fundamental support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Belgium | Canada | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | private donors in Australia, Japan the Republic of Korea, and Spain.

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# UNHCR Panama Operational Presence

