

November - December 2023

Key Figures

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

520,085 People crossed the Darien jungle between January and December, doubling the number of refugees and migrants who entered last year.

UNHCR informed **3,260** people about the asylum system in Panama and UNHCR's mandate.

Context

Protests against *Minera Panama*'s mining contract extended for over five weeks, resulting in mobility issues across the country. Blockades affected buses transporting refugees and migrants from Darien's Temporary Reception Centres (ETRMs) to Costa Rica, causing many to continue their journey on foot.

Legislators approved a Law indefinitely [suspending the future granting of concessions](#) for metallic mining activities. On 28 November, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) announced the [unconstitutionality of Law 406](#) that approved the contract. Civil society groups, labour unions, and indigenous communities welcomed the decision, and demonstrators opened the blockages.

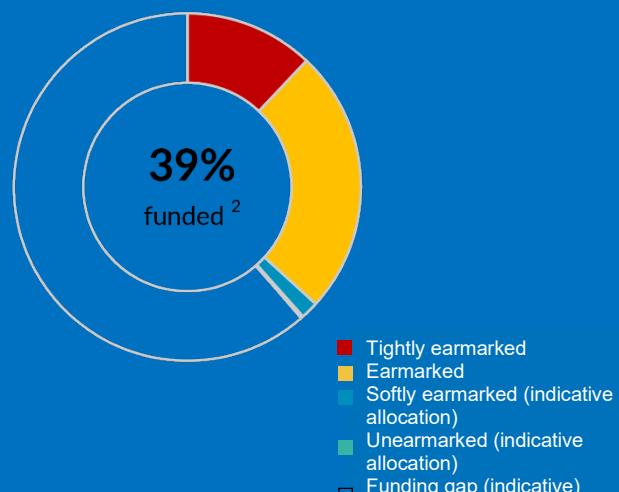
On December 7, UNHCR and IOM issued a [joint statement](#) calling for a stronger response to mixed movements in the scope of the over 500,000 people that crossed the Darien jungle. The Director of the National Migration Service (SNM) mentioned that in 2023, the Government repatriated more than 700 individuals and denied entry to nearly 10,000 people, particularly at Tocumen airport. Since the release of [Executive Decree 112](#), which created a Temporary Protection Permit granting a two-year temporary residency, 10,000 people have applied.

In the framework of the [16 Days of Activism](#), UNHCR launched its visibility campaign *Todas y Todos Podemos Prevenir la Violencia* and liaised with the Municipality of San Miguelito to host a community fair to raise awareness against gender-based violence (GBV). Over 100 people participated.



Regional funding Overview

as of 15 December 2023



\$55.4 million
UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

¹ 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**.

² 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 Darién and Chiriquí. UNHCR has partnerships with Fundación Espacio Creativo (FEC), HIAS, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Panamanian Red Cross (CRP) and the Pastoral of Human Mobility (PMH).

 **Coordination with Local Authorities** | In Darién, UNHCR inaugurated its multipurpose sports court during the ETRM San Vicente opening anniversary. Over 100 people, participated. In Chiriquí, UNHCR and the Ministry of Education organized a workshop about Panama's history to strengthen local integration. Thirty-four individuals joined to the thematic panting session, including asylum-seekers and host community members.

 **Protection** | UNHCR and partners trained over 100 Government officials on international protection and statelessness prevention. UNHCR interviewed over 200 refugees and migrants during the monthly protection monitoring in Darién and Chiriquí. The Agency and partners provided information on the risks of the route, the asylum system in Panama and the Agency's mandate to over 15,000 people. With NRC, UNHCR assisted 92 people with asylum applications.

 **Cash-Based Assistance (CBI)** | UNHCR, through CRP, HIAS and NRC, assisted 168 households with cash-based assistance for food, medicines, livelihoods, education, documentation, rent and temporary accommodation, reaching nearly 400 people during November and December.

 **Humanitarian Assistance** | UNHCR, through CRP, provided primary health care to 1,925 refugees and migrants at Darien's ETRMs.

 **Local Integration and Livelihoods** | UNHCR hosted the closing ceremony of its third Leadership and Mentoring Programme for Youth. Twenty-nine students participated, including 22 from Colegio de Panamá and seven asylum-seekers. Participants presented projects on local integration and efforts to combat xenophobia. UNHCR, HIAS, and the Manpower group held the Christmas without Borders event, where thirty-five participants of the employability program received their certification.



UNHCR'S STRONG TIES WORKSHOP

In David, Chiriquí, UNHCR, HIAS and the Ministry of Women held the integration workshop Strong Ties. A total of 22 asylum-seekers and six people with protection needs staying at the *Medalla Milagrosa* shelter participated. The workshop aimed to strengthen community bonds, promote integration with host communities, and enhance the asylum-seekers' support networks.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: the United States of America, the European Union, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Guyana, Spain 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: Australia for UNHCR| Belgium | Canada | Denmark | España con ACNUR| France | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Japan for UNHCR | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Sweden for UNHCR | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United Kingdom for UNHCR | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe | USA for UNHCR | Private donors in China, Italy, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

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