

# Annual Results Report

**2025**

**Panama MCO**

## Acknowledgements

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### Note:

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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# Section 1: Context and Overview

## 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

In 2025, UNHCR's Multi Country Office (MCO) in Panama underwent realignment, particularly in its protection response and operational presence, amid a complex regional context, protection gaps, and resource constraints. Due to funding gaps, the Office undertook a restructuring that included terminating partnerships, reducing staff, and shifting operational focus. As of August, UNHCR had closed its offices in Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname, and downscaled its presence in Belize and Panama. In September, the MCO expanded its coverage to 22 countries, including oversight of the national offices in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as other Caribbean States.

Political and legal developments shaped the operating context. In Aruba, the Government advanced the 'Hunto Pa Progreso' regularization programme, registering some 6,000 applicants by October and offering work-permit pathways for undocumented people who had entered regularly before 1 July 2025.

In Curaçao, authorities revised Article 3 of the European Convention for Human Rights (ECHR) policy framework, extending detention periods of up to 18 months and expediting deportations. Despite this, courts reaffirmed that irregular entry alone does not justify detention and that alternatives must be considered.

In Belize, the Cabinet extended eligibility for the Amnesty Programme to persons who could prove residence up to December 2019 and later signed the Agreement for Cooperation Regarding the Examination of Protection Requests with the US, allowing the transfer of asylum-seekers to Belize for the examination of their international protection claims. This included an advisory role for UNHCR, which is still coordinating its involvement.

In Cuba, the humanitarian situation worsened as economic crisis and repeated climate-related shocks, such as Hurricane Melissa, compounded vulnerabilities, while new immigration and citizenship legislation introducing humanitarian residency for UNHCR-mandated populations remained pending implementation, leaving refugees fully reliant on UNHCR assistance.

In Guyana, forcibly displaced people faced long-standing barriers to access basic services, particularly in remote Indigenous areas. Geopolitical tensions over the Essequibo and the discontinuation of UNHCR's presence added uncertainty to an already fragile protection environment. In neighboring Suriname, UNHCR also withdrew its presence, which had focused on engaging with the authorities to expand the protection space for individuals seeking international protection.

In Nicaragua, the Government's decision to withdraw from UNHCR, following the Agency's appeal for increased support for Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica, further eroded regional cooperation, limiting protection pathways and oversight.

Panama recorded a steep decline in northbound movements. Although irregular entries through the Darién decreased by 99 per cent, authorities recorded over 22,300 people in reverse flows, driven by deterrence policies and expulsions.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR conducted a comprehensive review of the caseload, resulting in the closure of approximately 12,000 files and an updated total population of 24,000 from 41 countries. Meanwhile the Government expanded its Migrant Registration Framework (MRF) to include all people in an irregular situation, authorizing temporary stay and work from 1 January to 30 September 2026, an important but time-bound opening for thousands of people who were previously excluded.

Across the region, political, legal, security, and socioeconomic shifts changed the scale and nature of displacement, compelling UNHCR to streamline its presence, intensify targeted protection, support government-led efforts, and adapt to an increasingly restrictive humanitarian landscape.

## 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

### 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

#### **Forcibly displaced and stateless people access comprehensive protection.**

Despite persistent operational constraints throughout the year, key developments contributed to improvements in the protection landscape within MCO Panama's area of coverage.

In Aruba, forcibly displaced people gained strengthened safeguards following a Joint Court of Justice ruling in January 2025, which noted that asylum-seekers who file an appeal cannot be deported. This judgment reinforced the country's obligations under the ECHR and the principle of nonrefoulement. Likewise, in Curaçao, individuals entering the country irregularly can no longer be detained solely on that basis, as the Joint Court confirmed that detention must be used as a last resort only, better protecting them from arbitrary custody. These legal achievements, which continue to evolve in their practical application, mark meaningful progress toward expanding protection space. They were driven by advocacy efforts, including UNHCR's ongoing engagement with the judiciary, helping support more consistent implementation of international protection standards.

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Belize benefited from strengthened asylum procedures, enhanced by UNHCR's partnership with the Refugee Department (RD) and collaboration with authorities. This resulted in higher approval rates and faster processing, with recognition increasing from 60 per cent in 2024 to 83 per cent in 2025 and processing times decreasing from 124 to 70 days. The Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) now also applies Cartagena's expanded refugee definition for Haitians, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans, increasing access to protection for these groups. The RD also strengthened its capacity to issue IDs to asylum-seekers, enabling timely access to documentation, supported by specialized technical equipment provided by UNHCR.

In Panama, asylum-seekers regained access to identification documents after the national ID-issuance system was restored for the first time since 2021. UNHCR contributed to this progress by providing essential technical equipment. A total of 1,523 asylum-seekers received IDs as part of their ongoing procedures, which help them access services, exercise freedom of movement, and engage in safer interactions with authorities. UNHCR's advocacy efforts also strengthened legal pathways for people in need of international protection, as reflected in the recognition of 55 refugees, the issuance of 40 permanent residence permits, and 129 work permits.

In Cuba, in the absence of a national asylum system, UNHCR continued conducting refugee status determination under its mandate, recognizing 19 refugees and ensuring continued access to protection.

Across the region, more than 3,000 people received support to navigate legal procedures and reduce refoulement risks. This includes representation in asylum cases and engagement in judicial and administrative processes, monitoring detention centers, and challenging deportation orders in Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, and Panama. Capacity building remained central to impact: over 1,500 government officials received training on international protection, strengthening rights-sensitive practices across institutions. Additionally, nearly 800 people obtained civil status or other vital documentation, which is foundational for exercising basic rights and reducing vulnerability to exploitation, arrest, or statelessness.

Partners strengthened or established two-way communication and feedback systems, including post-consultation interviews, feedback forms, and feedback boxes. Input from forcibly displaced informed adjustments to activities and communication methods, reinforcing the importance of continuous community engagement.

## 4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

**Forcibly displaced and stateless people achieve the most appropriate durable solution in safety and dignity.**

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2025)
<b>4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement</b>			
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	107	9
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	17	41
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8	6
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	195	225

In 2025, refugee families across the MCO made progress toward stability, safer living conditions, and stronger participation in their communities. In general, forcibly displaced people were able to access specialized assistance, including mental health and psychosocial services, protection responses for women and girls survivors of violence, as well as gradual advances in livelihoods and social inclusion. While access to these solutions varied by context, refugees across the subregion increasingly benefited from integration initiatives.

In Panama, 636 refugees and asylum-seekers strengthened their capacity to identify risks and support peers, reinforcing community networks. Decree No. 30 of 2025 integrated UNHCR into the emergency Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Commission, ensuring refugees and asylum-seekers are considered in national mental health responses.

In Trinidad and Tobago, improved bilingual capacities enabled safer communication for Spanish-speaking children at risk of trafficking and violence against women and girls, while 200 police officials enhanced their ability to manage language barriers and provide survivor-centred responses.

In Aruba, 90 adolescent girls, including displaced Colombians and Venezuelans, completed the Girl Shine programme with host community peers, supporting protection and social cohesion. In Curaçao, 1,122 displaced people accessed primary and maternal healthcare, where services for non-nationals remain limited. Following Hurricane Melissa in Cuba, 8,000 people received lifesaving assistance as part of a broader UN response that reached 32,000 individuals.

As of 2025, more than 500 asylum-seekers in Belize had obtained permanent residency through the Amnesty Programme, including 67 supported with ID issuance costs this year.

A total of 294 refugees were approved for resettlement, and 288 departed from Aruba, Cuba, Curacao, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago, ensuring long-term safety for those most at risk. Complementary pathways expanded, including the first refugee family in the Caribbean relocated from Trinidad and Tobago to Canada under the Economic Mobility Pathways Project.

Refugee leadership played a central role in UNHCR's livelihoods and economic inclusion initiatives. In Aruba and Cuba, 141 refugees and asylum-seekers improved their language skills in Papiamentu, English, and Spanish. In Panama, 10 refugee champions from the Cybersecurity Innovation Project trained more than 150 refugees and host community members in digital safety. Overall, in this country, 188 individuals gained livelihood skills, including more than 100 participants in the Creciendo Juntos initiative. Fifteen per cent of the refugee-led businesses participating in this programme formalized, and 21 enterprises entered the market. Partnerships with ManpowerGroup, Clandestino Lab, and over 30 companies in the Companies with Refugees initiative broadened employment pathways, resulting in concrete job placements and internships, including with Coca-Cola. Refugee women's leadership also advanced in Panama with the creation of the first Central American refugee women-led foundation focused on promoting livelihoods, bringing together 10 women representing 26 enterprises.

In terms of community-based integration, in Aruba, 442 children participated in the WAW Mobile

programme, supporting recreational, educational, and social inclusion opportunities. Refugee voices reached new audiences through Con Amor Desde Panamá, with thousands of letters written by refugees and distributed nationwide to authorities, diplomatic corps, and civil society, as part of a multi-country initiative involving Belize, Chile, and Ecuador. In the Caribbean, refugee experiences were highlighted through public screenings of UNHCR's film Hidden Life, amplified by high-profile supporter Jouman Fattal with extended screenings in the Netherlands, generating global funding support for integration and protection efforts.

## Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual(2025)
<b>2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services</b>			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.66%	100.00%
<b>3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education</b>			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	66.04%	67.92%
<b>3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education</b>			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	44.12%	60.00%
<b>3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark</b>			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	57.26%	51.29%

## 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

Funding constraints this year emerged as a significant challenge to advancing solutions and expanding protection for refugees and asylum-seekers across MCO Panama's area of responsibility. These limitations affected programme capacity and staffing, prompting strategic adjustments in operational prioritization and coverage, as well as phased transitions in some areas of work. The Agency strengthened its engagement with authorities, partners, and communities to prevent service gaps. Some interventions, including mental health and psychosocial support, specialized services for women and girls who survived violence, and livelihoods initiatives, experienced reduced coverage. The progressive scaling down of financial assistance further affected the ability of the most vulnerable households to meet basic needs, heightening their exposure to protection risks and adding pressure on already stretched national systems.

Legal and institutional factors across the MCO also continued to influence the extent to which refugees and asylum-seekers could consistently access asylum procedures and documentation. Further reforms to the asylum systems in Panama and Belize would support efforts to reduce backlogs and processing delays. In several Caribbean contexts covered by the MCO, asylum systems remain absent or limited, which continues to restrict pathways to protection and regular stay. Regularization initiatives advanced in Aruba and Curaçao, highlighting the opportunity to further strengthen protection-sensitive elements. This has guided the Agency's engagement with authorities to support efforts toward more flexible and protection-sensitive procedures.

In Curaçao, particularly, UNHCR access to the detention center remains limited, restricting protection responses. Conditions in detention continue to warrant close attention, as they may increase vulnerabilities among those detained. Across the region, the fragile protection environment contributed to documented cases of 666 people returned or deported, highlighting ongoing due-process challenges and the importance of strengthening safeguards against involuntary returns.

In Cuba, the delayed implementation of existing laws intended to support the integration of refugees under UNHCR's mandate, combined with the country's economic crisis, continued to constrain access to basic rights and essential services.

With reduced global resettlement quotas, opportunities for third-country resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees in the countries covered by the MCO Panama have narrowed, further limiting available pathways at a time of rising needs. Additionally, the expansion of the MCO's geographic coverage amid varying levels of government engagement presented challenges to coordination, advocacy, and slowed programme consistency.

To address these constraints, UNHCR is reprioritizing interventions through targeted cost-efficiency measures, strengthened oversight by its core multifunctional team based in Panama, and enhanced advocacy with donors, the private sector, and development actors. These engagements have proven essential to stabilizing core protection and integration services. Programmatically, scaling community-based approaches offers a practical way to extend reach where staffing is limited, empowering communities while maintaining essential protection functions.

In Panama and Belize, sustained engagement to reduce the asylum backlog, streamline documentation, and operationalize recent policy gains can accelerate access to rights. Across the MCO's coverage, UNHCR's advocacy and technical assistance to authorities aim to reduce dependence on humanitarian response and strengthen national ownership of protection systems. This includes leveraging platforms such as the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), municipal alliances, and emerging cooperation with CARICOM to promote more inclusive policies and expand protection for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

## 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In 2025, UNHCR strengthened cross-country collaboration with strategic partnerships with governments, refugee-led organizations, civil society, the private sector, and other UN agencies.

In Panama, UNHCR and IOM co-chaired the interagency Human Mobility Group, ensuring coordinated protection, harmonized data, and joint humanitarian action for refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. UNHCR worked with ONPAR and CONARE to enhance documentation systems, eligibility procedures, and institutional capacities, while partnering with HIAS, NRC, the Panamanian Red Cross, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana, Fundación Espacio Creativo and the City of Knowledge Foundation to deliver protection monitoring, legal guidance, MHPSS services, and local integration support. Through the "Empresas con Refugiados" coalition, over 30 companies and development banks advanced inclusive hiring, strengthened employer awareness, and expanded livelihood pathways for refugees and asylum seekers. Collaboration with private sector networks, including ManpowerGroup, ANREH, national chambers of commerce, and SUMARSE, enhanced skills profiling, job placement pipelines, and access to market-aligned training, while entrepreneurship initiatives supported refugee-led businesses to formalize, grow, and access financial services. Partnerships with development actors, including UNDP, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, and UN Women, strengthened national systems, skills recognition, and policy coherence across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Engagement with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), such as the World Bank/IFC, IDB, CAF, and CABEL, helped integrate refugee inclusion into small and medium enterprise development, social investment, labour-market programmes, and climate-related portfolios, leveraging data and innovative financing to advance self-reliance.

Across the Caribbean, collaboration remained central to UNHCR's response. In Aruba and Curaçao, UNHCR coordinated through the R4V Platform and partnered with Human Rights Defense Curaçao and CEDE Aruba to reinforce community outreach, protection training, and access to essential services. In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR cooperated through the R4V Platform and with civil society and international partners to expand access to documentation, health services, and community-based protection. In Cuba, UNHCR worked with national authorities and local partners to support communities affected by humanitarian shocks and ensure protection outreach for displaced and at-risk populations.

In Belize, UNHCR partnered with the Refugees Department, Help for Progress, HUMANA People to People Belize, and the Human Rights Commission to strengthen asylum procedures, conduct documentation clinics, expand access to legal assistance, and advance MIRPS commitments on economic inclusion and regularization. These efforts strengthened refugee status determination capacity and expanded community-based protection networks. In Guyana, UNHCR collaborated with government institutions and civil society

organizations to improve protection monitoring, community engagement, and services for refugees and migrants.

Across the MCO, UNHCR sustained engagement in regional frameworks such as MIRPS and the R4V Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, promoting responsibility sharing and advancing commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees. Collectively, these partnerships supported progress toward UNHCR's Strategic Directions and contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

## Section 2: Results

### 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

#### 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

**Forcibly displaced and stateless people have unhindered access to the territory; to a fair and equitable asylum process in line with international standards, including registration; and can obtain legal status.**

##### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials</b>				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99.63%	100.00%	97.45%

##### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>01.1.1 Number of people registered on an individual basis</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	134
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	30
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	55
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	526
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	53
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,229
<b>01.2.1 Number of people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation</b>		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	389
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	86
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	301

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Progress toward ensuring access to territory, registration, and documentation advanced gradually, as reflected in shifts in institutional practices and policy development across MCO Panama's area of responsibility.

In Aruba, UNHCR strengthened authorities' understanding and application of international protection standards through sustained advocacy, engagement, and targeted capacity building with Immigration

(DIMAS) and the judiciary, supporting more consistent interviewing and decision-making. The formalization of the University of Aruba's legal clinic, Tienda di Ley, marked a step toward a sustainable mechanism for accessible legal support. The joint UNHCR–government Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), which included exchanges with Ecuador, helped identify protection gaps and supported progress toward a clearer legal framework for asylum. UNHCR also assisted in developing a draft *Lex specialis* for asylum, inspired by Ecuador's *Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana* and tailored to Aruba's system, along with proposed revisions to admission, expulsion, and asylum policies. The draft is pending submission to the Council of Ministers.

In Curaçao, UNHCR continued legal counselling and case follow-up related to Art. 3 ECHR, unlawful detention, and family separation. Strategic legal engagement contributed to jurisprudential changes, including the August 2025 ruling. UNHCR supported officials through training with a former judge of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on detention safeguards and facilitated the establishment of a small network of private attorneys for strategic litigation, with three active cases, including one before the ECHR.

In Guyana, institutional engagement prior to the office closure focused on advocating for access to documentation and legal stay for refugees. UNHCR engaged the Ministry of Home Affairs to encourage the issuance of national documentation for more than 70 refugees recognized under its mandate. The office also maintained registration activities and renewed certificates valid through May 2026. In Suriname, UNHCR continued registration activities until closure, enabling over 50 individuals to access temporary work permits issued by the Government.

In Trinidad and Tobago, political engagement following the new Government's appointment renewed dialogue on establishing a national asylum system and incorporating the standards of the 1951 Convention. UNHCR's support for a network of 16 pro bono attorneys and its leadership of the Protection Working Group helped strengthen safeguards against refoulement and search for alternatives to detention. In December 2025, the T&T Government announced the 2026 Registration Framework, which will include all nationalities.

In Belize, with UNHCR's support, the REC applied broader protection standards, including the Cartagena Declaration, while reducing RSD processing times and improving ID issuance. UNHCR also supported access to civil documentation by providing guidance on late birth registration procedures for 12 families and by advancing interagency cooperation with UNICEF and IOM to address barriers to birth registration.

In Panama, UNHCR enhanced institutional capacities by donating two mobile units to the Ombudsperson's Office, expanding its ability to provide legal guidance in remote areas. Authorities continued to allow access to territory and asylum procedures despite fluctuating mobility patterns. These efforts were supported by the provision of information and strengthened referral pathways, including those facilitated through UNHCR's border protection monitoring exercises. Capacity building for ONPAR and other institutions contributed to more consistent registration practices and stronger application of procedural safeguards.

## 4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

**Risk of gender-based violence is mitigated and survivors have access to the support they need to build resilience.**

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>04.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from specialized GBV programmes</b>		
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	411
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	424
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	359
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	144

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Across its area of responsibility, UNHCR contributed to reducing risks of violence against women and girls by strengthening the capacity of primary responders, improving access to protection services for over 1,300 individuals, and supporting coordinated prevention and response mechanisms. Overall progress was reflected in better-equipped national institutions, stronger referral pathways, and increased engagement of government and civil society.

In Aruba, UNHCR supported national efforts to prevent and address violence against women and girls by partnering with Fundación Contra Violencia Relacional (FCVR), the main organization providing specialized assistance and shelter to survivors. UNHCR strengthened FCVR's internal procedures and engagement with key government and civil society stakeholders. This included advancing the development of interagency SOPs to foster more timely and coherent responses. UNHCR also bolstered FCVR's operational capacity by funding the temporary hiring of a financial assistant and supporting the organization's 16 Days of Activism campaign, which amplified awareness of the heightened risks of violence against women and girls faced by forcibly displaced populations.

In Curaçao, UNHCR concluded the 'Girl Shine' initiative to prevent violence against adolescent girls. The programme, launched last year, provided a safe space for the displaced community and strengthened girls' life skills, confidence, and knowledge of safety strategies, while building supportive peer networks.

In Guyana, despite the office closure, UNHCR continued supporting partners' efforts to identify and assist women and girls survivors of violence, enabling access to psychosocial support and case management for more than 250 individuals. UNHCR's engagement strengthened community-based protection through awareness raising and empowerment initiatives. Moreover, targeted capacity building and participation in the 'Safe from the Start' initiative helped ensure that key competencies and practices remained in place following the office's closure. These efforts improved coordination among responders, including stronger referral pathways and collaboration with national health authorities for HIV testing services.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR helped strengthen protection for more than 350 women and children survivors or at risk of violence, through its partner La Casita and through direct implementation, ensuring refugees and asylum-seekers' access to support, help with police reporting, and temporary shelter for those facing heightened risks. UNHCR also contributed to improved practices within law enforcement by training over 200 police officers, increasing their understanding of language barriers and the specific challenges refugee women survivors of violence face when seeking assistance.

In Panama, UNHCR reinforced institutional capacity to address violence against women and girls through close cooperation with the Ministry of Women and other partners. Technical support for the DATAMUJER platform improved the availability of disaggregated data from 17 Comprehensive Care Centers, enabling better analysis of service access for refugee and asylum-seeker women. Institutional skills were strengthened through joint training for government officials, complemented by an MOU and the donation of 25 laptops to ease the Ministry's operational capacity. Through the Gender-based Violence Working Group, UNHCR expanded access to prevention, referral, and specialized services, including training for 636 refugees and asylum-seekers and support for 359 individuals. Awareness-raising efforts during the 16 Days of Activism further promoted understanding of violence against women and girls, digital violence, and safe technology use, supported by the relaunch of the "Your Voice Counts, Turn Silence into Color" campaign. UNHCR also advanced joint advocacy within the Inter-Agency Gender Group, including efforts to safeguard the Ministry of Women's institutional role.

## 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

**Forcibly displaced and stateless people have access to humanitarian support to meet their basic needs while working towards solutions.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items</b>				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	19.44%	25.00%	2.16%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	16
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	227
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	207
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	30
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	75
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	630
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	290
<b>08.2.1 Number of people who received non-food items</b>		
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	32
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	827

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Through sustained engagement with government, civil society, and other key actors, UNHCR helped foster more protection-sensitive approaches to providing basic needs and well-being support for refugees, asylum-seekers, and other vulnerable groups across its area of responsibility. This resulted in over 9,000 individuals receiving specialized assistance, including 4,170 who accessed Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services, 3,025 who received health support, 1,462 who obtained direct assistance to meet basic needs and exercise rights, 859 who received core relief items, and 217 who benefited from housing support.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR's joint leadership of the R4V Platform with IOM continued to reinforce coordinated stakeholder engagement to improve refugees' and migrants' access to rights and essential services. Most notably, through the Humanitarian Breakfast Series, the Platform continued to convene authorities, NGOs, the private sector, and UN agencies to advance collective initiatives. In 2025, discussions centered on health and immunizations, reinforcing stakeholders' commitment to ensuring no one is excluded from these essential services. UNHCR also contributed to strengthened child protection practices by supporting the Children's Authority with a bilingual caseworker, which enhanced the institution's capacity to communicate and effectively manage cases involving Spanish-speaking children, including those at heightened risk of trafficking and survivors of violence.

In Guyana, UNHCR and partners strengthened access to public services for forcibly displaced individuals by accompanying some 200 persons to government offices, particularly in Region 1. This improved their access to health, education, and other national services. Through its partner, the Agency also maintained critical assistance for vulnerable households, supporting their fulfillment of basic needs and reducing

pressures that often lead to negative coping mechanisms.

In Panama, UNHCR advanced refugees' well-being by contributing to the Intersectoral Technical Group on MHPSS, ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers were included in national health planning and protocols. Collaboration with the Ministry of Health under the framework of the MIRPS Good Practice Implementation Project laid the groundwork for a community-based programme with a mobile MHPSS unit to be deployed in 2026. This marked a significant step toward advancing inclusive psychosocial care within national health structures. Moreover, UNHCR offered technical advice to national authorities on applying international protection standards in processing individuals arriving under bilateral arrangements. Authorities progressively strengthened reception conditions, drawing on this guidance to help maintain basic wellbeing standards.

In Cuba, UNHCR continued to play a critical role in meeting refugees' basic needs, given the absence of a national asylum system and the resulting difficulties faced by people in need of international protection when seeking support. Material assistance and housing support were provided to more than 200 individuals, and UNHCR's continued engagement with authorities enabled a new group of refugees and asylum-seekers to access the national rationing system, helping safeguard their access to essential goods on equal terms with Cuban nationals. Access to education was also strengthened by enrolling refugee children in school. In addition, UNHCR mobilized resources through the UN emergency response mechanism following Hurricane Melissa, contributing to national preparedness and response efforts for vulnerable communities. Thanks to coordination with UNHRD and the generous support of ECHO, humanitarian flights, including kitchen sets (1,508), blankets (4,000), solar lamps (2,520), mosquito nets (5,400), sleeping mats (5,040), and tarpaulins (400) donated by UNHCR, arrived on the island in mid-November, reinforcing the delivery of lifesaving assistance to affected populations.

## 15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

**Opportunities for resettlement are increased for people in need of international protection most at risk.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement</b>				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	115	10	7
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	708	150	120

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, access to resettlement opportunities across the MCO Panama area of coverage remained a vital life-line. Despite reduced global quotas and resettlement staffing capacity, a number of states reaffirmed their commitment to third-country resettlement, providing a total of 170 slots for the countries covered by the MCO. Of note, Canada, allocated both country-specific quotas and unallocated quotas to Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curaçao, Cuba, and Panama. These contributions helped keep resettlement pathways open for refugees facing serious protection risks amid an evolving geopolitical landscape.

Overall, MCO Panama submitted 211 people for resettlement, and country operations in Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba and Curaçao, and Cuba, surpassed their annual quotas. The Agency achieved a very high acceptance rate of 99 per cent, and 288 people across its area of coverage departed for resettlement countries. These achievements underscore growing cooperation with States and the use of complementary pathways. A key milestone was the first-ever relocation from Trinidad and Tobago to Canada through the Economic Mobility Pathways programme, marking a new precedent for the Caribbean region. This programme offers an alternative route for refugees with specialized skills or professional experience that match labor needs in receiving countries. Canada collaborated with UNHCR to maintain access to protection pathways for affected refugees in Cuba, including one case that departed through a private sponsorship arrangement supported by UNHCR's technical guidance.

UNHCR played a central role in facilitating these advances through sustained case identification, counseling, interviewing, and submission processes, while ensuring continuity despite office closures and staff reductions. By maintaining close coordination with the resettlement countries and updated databases of vulnerable individuals, UNHCR was able to rapidly prepare submissions and prioritize those with the highest protection needs. Following the closure of field offices, MCO Panama assumed responsibility for monitoring all cases, managing statistics, liaising with authorities, and finalizing submissions to ensure the operation met and exceeded the 2025 quota.

## 16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

**People in need of international protection are included in national systems and access their rights to work, social protection, education, and health.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Indicator		
		Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
<b>16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land</b>				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24.37%	35.00%	33.94%

### Core Output Indicators

Country	Indicator	
	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>16.1.1. Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Fully
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all

Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
<b>16.2.1 Number of people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures</b>		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	67
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	46

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In Aruba, UNHCR expanded language-learning opportunities through its partnership with the Centro pa Desaroyo di Aruba (CEDE). Expanding the WAW Mobile initiative, a recreational mobile unit, enabled engagement with 442 children and encouraged inclusive interactions between host and displaced communities.

In Curaçao, UNHCR's community-based programming aligned with the government strategy, reinforcing its focus on social cohesion. Art-based integration activities implemented by VENEX benefited 295 people, encouraging positive interaction between the host community and forcibly displaced individuals. A notable milestone occurred when the Government requested that art-therapy sessions be extended to individuals in detention, signaling institutional openness to this inclusive approach.

Guyana's Ministry of Education maintained its inclusive policy allowing undocumented children to enroll, and authorities, particularly in Region 1, demonstrated a commitment to improving attendance, despite remoteness and limited school capacity. In addition, socioeconomic inclusion initiatives such as agricultural fairs co-organized with the government connected indigenous Warao producers with local buyers, promoting income-generation and social cohesion.

In Cuba, UNHCR continued to advocate for the implementation of national citizenship and immigration legislation, while supporting 30 refugees and asylum-seekers with Spanish courses to facilitate their integration into local systems.

To address child labour risks affecting the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Labour to strengthen its technical capacity through training from the San Remo Institute's and organizing community consultations. These efforts informed the development of the National Child Labour and Minimum Wages Policies and contributed to more protection-sensitive approaches within national systems.

Community Volunteers (COMS), refugees and asylum-seekers engaged in community support continued to serve as an essential link between UNHCR and affected populations, facilitating two-way communication, identifying protection risks, facilitating referrals, and co-creating solutions that demonstrated community ownership and self-organization. UNHCR also supported access to education for asylum-seeker, refugee, and migrant children by distributing learning supplies and education kits to RC schools and Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs), including 60 kits to the Catholic Education Board of Management (CEBM) for use in Catholic schools. Additionally, eight CFSs received in-kind assistance to strengthen their efforts to include non-national children in the national education system.

In Belize, UNHCR's documentation support made national services more accessible to refugees and asylum-seekers, including covering the costs of permanent residence IDs for 67 amnesty beneficiaries. UNHCR supported 140 individuals in obtaining social security cards. UNHCR promoted inclusive education by supporting 10 rural schools with infrastructure and supplies and by advocating for fee waivers, enabling at least 29 displaced children to enroll who would otherwise have been excluded.

Refugee women in Panama established the first refugee-women-led foundation in Central America, marking a significant milestone in representation and community-driven integration. Socioeconomic inclusion advanced for 108 refugees through market-aligned skills training, with several participants formalizing their businesses and entering local markets. Financial inclusion also improved, with 12 per cent of UNHCR training graduates able to open bank accounts. Engagement with more than 30 companies under the 'Empresas con Refugiados' initiative expanded private-sector awareness of inclusive employment policies. Access to online education improved across MCO Panama, through the joint UNHCR–Coursera partnership, available for forcibly displaced people despite mobility or documentation barriers.

## Other Core Outcome Indicators

Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target(2025)	Actual(2025)
<b>3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol</b>				
Aruba	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Belize	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Cuba	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Curacao	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Guyana	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Panama	None	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment
Suriname	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Trinidad and Tobago	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
<b>3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness</b>				
Aruba	None	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment
Belize	None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Cuba	None	Not yet aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Curacao	None	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment
Guyana	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Panama	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Suriname	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Trinidad and Tobago	None	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned

## Other Core Output Indicators

Country	Population Type	Actual (2025)
<b>02.1.1 UNHCR has provided capacity development support to strengthen the national status determination system(s), in accordance with international standards</b>		
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
<b>03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes
<b>05.1.1 Number of children and caregivers who received child protection services</b>		
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	357

<b>06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	142
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	343
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	115
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	144
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,806
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	54
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	463
<b>07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	23
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	106
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	19
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
<b>07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback &amp; response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	33
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	329
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	78
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	858
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,324
<b>07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	838
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,197
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	115
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	883
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,091
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	6,504
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	54
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,593
<b>09.1.1 Number of people who received shelter and housing assistance</b>		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	20

Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	197
<b>10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services</b>		
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,373
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	652
<b>10.2.1 Number of consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services</b>		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4,085
<b>11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming</b>		
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	92
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
<b>13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions</b>		
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	188
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
<b>14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation</b>		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0

## 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

In 2025, UNHCR strengthened the implementation of AGD policies across Belize, Panama, Cuba, and the Caribbean. Data disaggregation improved, including through Panama's DATAMUJER platform, which expanded data on refugee and asylum-seeker women accessing services. In Belize, a participatory assessment with 106 refugees and asylum-seekers across all districts, covering older persons, persons with disabilities, single parents, adolescents, Indigenous groups, women at risk, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, generated evidence for 2026 programming.

In Cuba, UNHCR promoted AGD-sensitive approaches among authorities and communities despite operational constraints, including sensitization efforts to ensure consideration of refugees' and asylum-seekers' cultural diversity. These efforts helped prevent risks, with no incidents of concern reported. Across the Caribbean, AGD integration advanced through community outreach, art-based psychosocial activities and tailored awareness campaigns for diverse groups, including LGBTIQ+ persons and women and girls.

Meaningful participation remained central to programming. In Belize, the participatory assessment created structured feedback loops with diverse communities, improving accountability and relevance of interventions. In Panama, 273 forcibly displaced people were reached through protection monitoring that incorporated AGD-informed risk identification to guide case referrals and targeted support. Community events, including World Refugee Day activities engaging 338 refugees and 50 host community members, reinforced social cohesion and inclusion. Across Aruba and Curaçao, UNHCR worked through community volunteers and local partners to maintain participation despite office closures, using outreach, communication trees, and community projects to ensure displaced persons' voices continued shaping protection responses. In Trinidad and Tobago, community outreach members facilitated feedback channels,

identified vulnerable individuals, and guided local solutions despite a shrinking operational footprint. Partner CCHR installed post-service surveys to collect feedback and improve services for asylum-seekers and refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Labour in T&T to conduct focus group discussions with forcibly displaced populations on minimum wage and conditions for working children, which will inform upcoming national policies.

Prevention and response to violence against women and girls remained a priority across the subregion. In Panama, UNHCR and the Ministry of Women expanded coordinated services, training 636 refugees and asylum-seekers on prevention and providing specialized support to 359 survivors. In Aruba, UNHCR strengthened the island's only shelter for violence survivors (FCVR) through improved SOPs, case management and awareness activities. In Guyana, 253 displaced women and girls—especially in high-risk mining areas—received specialized services. In Trinidad and Tobago, 357 women heads of household and survivors received assistance, and 200 police officers received sensitization training. Across all operations, UNHCR advanced equality by increasing women's access to documentation, services, safe spaces and community-led initiatives, while reinforcing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse safeguards.

UNHCR continues to build on the strategy for the 2023 First Indigenous Forum in Trinidad and Tobago under the R4V platform, establishing multisectoral priorities and conducting participatory consultations with Indigenous communities. This process helped identify key needs and foster collaboration with local actors to pursue sustainable solutions. As part of the action plan, UNHCR held meetings with Warao communities across the country to support the creation of community coordination and organizational mechanisms that strengthen Indigenous participation in decision-making and in shaping durable solutions alongside authorities and humanitarian partners.

## Section 3: Resources

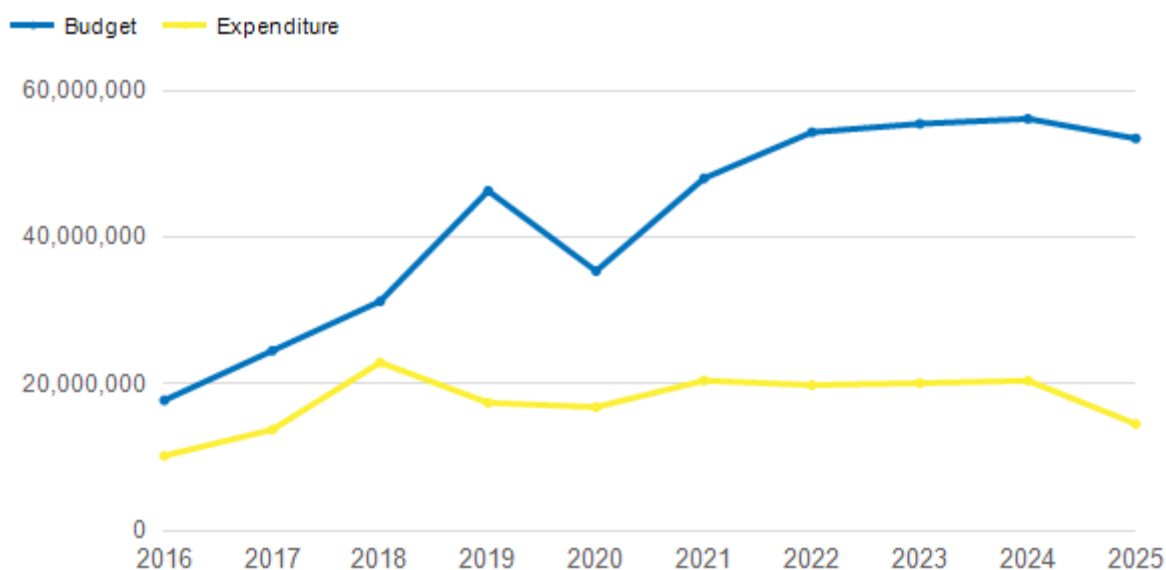
### 3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

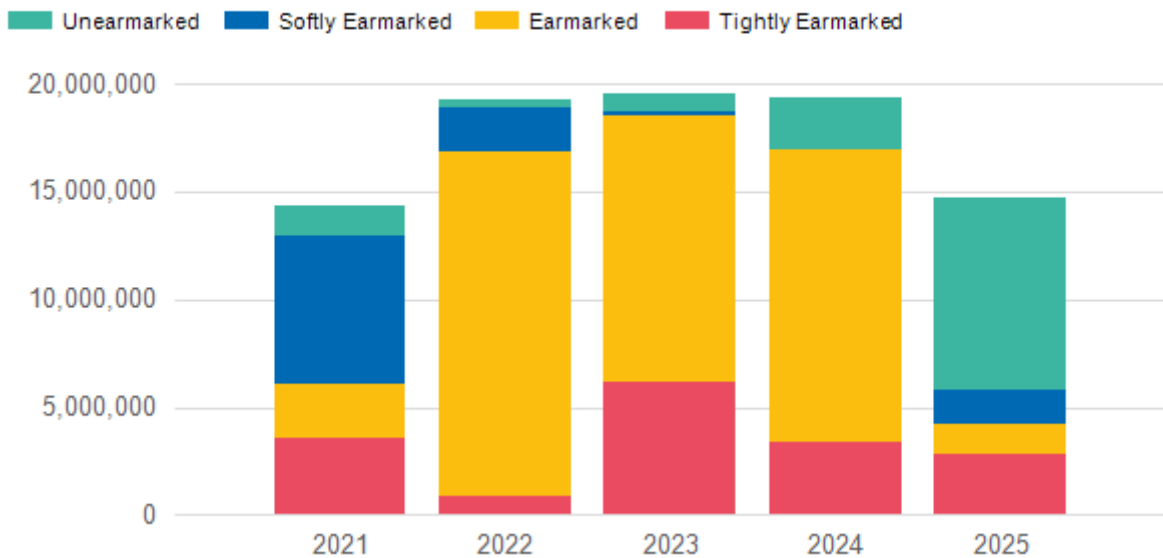
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	19,217,349	5,531,535	28.78%	5,531,535	100.00%
IA4: Solve	34,225,609	9,016,901	26.35%	9,016,901	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,442,957</b>	<b>14,548,436</b>	<b>27.22%</b>	<b>14,548,436</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	19,217,349	5,531,535	28.78%	5,531,535	100.00%
OA4: GBV	6,792,268	1,503,968	22.14%	1,503,968	100.00%
OA8: Wellbeing	10,278,657	3,671,014	35.71%	3,671,014	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	4,714,855	755,253	16.02%	755,253	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	12,439,830	3,086,665	24.81%	3,086,665	100.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,442,957</b>	<b>14,548,436</b>	<b>27.22%</b>	<b>14,548,436</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Budget and Expenditure Trend**



### Contributions Trend by Type



## 3.2. Resources Overview

In 2025, MCO Panama faced one of its most challenging financial years, meeting only 24 per cent of requirements, leaving a 76 per cent funding gap. This severe shortfall reshaped UNHCR’s operational presence. National offices and field presences in Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and Panama’s Darién and Chiriquí border areas were closed, accompanied by major staffing reductions. As the footprint shifted, remote engagement became the primary modality across the newly expanded 22-country Area of Responsibility. To maintain continuity as much as possible and deliver essential protection and solutions programmes, UNHCR scaled up partnerships with national authorities, civil society, and regional mechanisms such as CARICOM and the UNCT.

Resource prioritization was driven by the high level of earmarking, as 73 per cent of contributions were tightly or strictly earmarked. UNHCR concentrated resources on life-saving activities and essential protection services, and was compelled to reduce or suspend areas without earmarked support. Fifteen partner-implemented projects were cut (five fully terminated), along with reductions in case management, financial assistance, community outreach, and livelihoods interventions.

The operation continued to broaden its resource-mobilization approach, strengthening and diversifying partnerships to help meet critical needs across the region. In Aruba and Curaçao, support from the Dutch Postcode Lottery enabled continued programming to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, strengthening community engagement, and sustaining legal assistance. These contributions were critical at a time when tight earmarking limited UNHCR’s ability to address urgent unmet needs in multiple countries.

Throughout 2025, MCO Panama continued advocating for flexible, unearmarked funding as essential to maintaining a protection-driven response in a region marked by diverse contexts, emerging crises, and growing humanitarian needs. The operation’s ability to deliver effectively in 2026 will depend on donor support and its capacity to adapt to rapidly evolving conditions across Central America and the Caribbean

## Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

### 4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

The MCO's 2025 review underscored that improving protection and solutions requires coordinated efforts to strengthen national systems and ensure that procedures are accessible to forcibly displaced and stateless people.

In Aruba and Curaçao, regularization processes showed that varying information availability may pose challenges for some individuals, including difficulties meeting documentation requirements. This underscores the value of strengthening counselling for such processes. By contrast, QAI efforts and exchanges with Ecuador showed that technical guidance and peer learning support consistent, informed policy changes.

Remote oversight of Guyana, Suriname, and other Caribbean countries highlighted the importance of strengthening engagement with authorities, partners, and refugee-led organizations. Moreover, the phaseout of UNHCR's presence emphasized the need for closer collaboration with UN partners and civil society to maintain access to protection services.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the absence of an asylum system reaffirmed the value of partnerships to expand access to rights. The Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot and the MRF's expansion underscored the role of complementary initiatives that broaden solutions beyond resettlement.

In Belize, targeted assistance strengthened accountability and helped overcome documentation barriers. In Panama, experiences with admissibility procedures and asylum backlogs underscored the need of strengthening institutional capacity.

Returns and removals across the region exposed gaps for those without access to asylum, while initiatives for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls reaffirmed the importance of integrating protection services into national systems. Inclusion efforts demonstrated that progress is more sustainable when paired with private sector engagement.

These lessons will guide UNHCR's 2026 programme to focus on stronger government engagement, protection-sensitive planning, and reinforced accountability.



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