

Annual Results Report

2024

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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- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

In 2024, the UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama faced a complex displacement situation impacting its countries across the Caribbean and Central America. Although the overall number of individuals on the move, including refugees and asylum-seekers, decreased compared to the previous year, the region registered a significant number of people fleeing violence, political instability, and economic hardship.

The MCO covers Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, hosting over 200,000 forcibly displaced people. Multiple factors have emphasized the importance of UNHCR continuing its protection and assistance for these populations, considering the increasing pressure on asylum systems that have limited absorption capacity, the risks associated with detention and refoulement, and complicated legal structures. In 2024, the region faced Government transitions in Aruba and Panama; economic crisis and blackouts in Cuba, as well as extreme weather events that impacted this country and Belize; escalating border tensions between Guyana and Venezuela; diplomatic constraints following Venezuela's elections; and overall enforced border controls and protection gaps in the region. The protection environments for forcibly displaced and stateless people in MCO's operations remained challenging. These countries' asylum systems are often under pressure or still developing. Some countries have yet to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention. Asylum procedures are often lengthy, complex and with low recognition rates, heightening the vulnerabilities of those with international protection needs. In countries like Aruba and Curaçao, the risk of refoulement persisted due to the limited capacity or absence of asylum processes, increasing the danger of returning refugees to unsafe conditions. Legal uncertainties in Trinidad and Tobago also posed risks of detention and refoulement. In 2023, a domestic court ruled that despite the country's acceding to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, their obligations and the principle of non-refoulement do not apply as the Convention has not been incorporated into domestic legislation.

Countries experiencing increased displacement across the region, such as Panama, faced significant pressure on local infrastructure, particularly in border areas like Darien and Chiriquí. However, changes in border policies in the second half of the year contributed to a substantial decrease in the number of people crossing through the Darien Jungle, dropping from 520,085 in 2023 to 302,203 individuals in 2024, a 42 per cent decline. These measures included a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United States aimed at curbing irregular entries and providing technical assistance. Through the MoU, Panama conducted some 40 charter repatriation flights and secured seats on over 15 commercial flights, resulting in more than 1,600 individuals deported or repatriated by the end of 2024.

Worsening weather events further exacerbated displacement, with hurricanes impacting Belize and Cuba, underscoring the need for preparedness and resilience strategies.

In response, UNHCR continued to play a pivotal role in advocating for stronger asylum systems, promoting alternative legal stay arrangements and providing essential services to those needing protection. The Agency worked closely with national governments and partners to improve asylum procedures, raise awareness of refugee rights, and provide legal assistance and direct support to ensure access to healthcare, education, and legal documentation. Despite some positive developments in countries under MCO, refugees still struggle to gain access to livelihoods, face discrimination, and experience barriers in accessing fundamental rights and essential services.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

Forcibly displaced and stateless people access comprehensive protection.

In Panama, the number of people reported as having been refouled decreased from 30 in 2023 to 9 in 2024. Access to the airport and to information on forced returns was more limited in 2024 due to the change of government and higher focus on security. Although the number of massive deportations and returns was much higher, this figure represents asylum seekers who contacted UNHCR for assistance during refoulement. In Trinidad & Tobago, UNHCR observed a significant decrease in refoulement cases, which dropped from 485 in 2023 to 33 in 2024, attributed to changing political dynamics and to UNHCR's advocacy and capacity building with almost 450 Government officials trained on humanitarian and international protection law, including coast guard officials, police and immigration officers.

During 2024, UNHCR worked with governments and partners to improve asylum procedures, promote alternative legal stay arrangements for refugees, raise awareness of refugee rights, eliminate barriers to access essential services, and ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement. Protection monitoring exercises were vital in identifying gaps and ensuring that interventions were responsive to the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR assisted Belize in its role as Pro-Tempore Chair of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), expanding support for asylum-seekers and refugees, streamlining processes, enhancing regional cooperation, and providing stability and a sense of belonging to many forcibly displaced. With UNHCR's assistance, the country reactivated its National Technical Team and established a National Action Plan for 2024-2026, and with the Amnesty Programme, provided a path to citizenship for asylum-seekers.

In Aruba, the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) sponsored by UNHCR led to meaningful advancements in refugee protection, paving the way for further progress. Government entities, including asylum department, Immigration and Guarda Nos Costa, participated in training sessions, improving asylum adjudication processes and strengthening institutional capacity to respond and prevent incidents at the sea in line with international standards. UNHCR followed up on recommendations to enhance the system's efficiency, ensuring a more effective and fair asylum process. In Panama, UNHCR and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) conducted an assessment of the asylum system and identified several areas which require strengthening, including data collection, case management, physical case file tracking and digitalization to enable the asylum authority to produce more reliable up-to-date statistics, improve case assessments, and expedite status determination procedures.,.

UNHCR's strategic legal interventions have played a crucial role in preventing the refoulement of individuals in the resettlement pipeline, ensuring their safety and protecting them from potentially dangerous situations. In Aruba, these interventions have led to a significant higher court ruling on unlawful deportation, setting a legal precedent that strengthened the refugee protection framework. In Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR was crucial in protecting forcibly displaced people facing increased risks due to lack of documentation. The Agency registered asylum-seekers under its own mandate and issued certificates to shield them from detention, deportation, and security risks, addressing their vulnerabilities.

UNHCR has facilitated refugees' access to essential services through international and local partners. Legal counseling and representation have supported over 36,000 individuals in navigating asylum processes while documentation assistance has secured their status. Guidance on asylum procedures and deportation risks has helped them make informed decisions about the future, including through digital platforms like UNHCR's Confía en el Tucán, which reached over 31 million visualizations on TikTok and Facebook, with 1.6 million engagements.

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 (2024)
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement			
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2	107
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4	17
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	8
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	406	195

UNHCR's resettlement programme had a transformative impact on the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers. Interventions facilitated the processing and medical checks, ensuring 337 travelled to their resettlement countries during the year, with a slight decrease from 2023, when 424 made their journeys. In 2024 UNHCR's efforts to update and monitor cases with local integration prospects provided long-term solutions. The submission of cases, including individuals with urgent medical and life-threatening needs, not only offered solutions to the most vulnerable refugees but also strengthened the protection environment in the region. In 2024, UNHCR identified, interviewed, and submitted for consideration resettlement cases of 1,176 individuals based on specific protection criteria.

In 2024, UNHCR played an essential role in ensuring forcibly displaced and stateless people achieve durable solutions in safety and dignity, facilitating access to crucial services and empowering individuals to rebuild their lives. In Belize, with the support of UNHCR, nearly 500 asylum-seekers achieved permanent residency through the country's Amnesty Programme by the end of 2024. This milestone not only enabled their swift regularization but also opened pathways to citizenship and integration, as permanent residency is a crucial first step towards further protection and stability. UNHCR's support in covering documentation costs for 171 of these individuals has allowed them to access fundamental rights, including fair employment, significantly contributing to their security. UNHCR has enabled more effective prevention and response to violence against women and girls, including training for government officials and civil society on basic concepts and discrimination prevention. Awareness campaigns, such as "Your Voice Counts: Turn Silence into Color" during the 16 Days of Activism on violence against women and girls, have promoted equality between women and men in forced displacement, reaching over 240,000 daily metro users in Panama. The creation of safe spaces for vulnerable groups, including individuals with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) provided crucial support and a platform to share experiences. The Girl Shine initiative launched in Curaçao equipped community members with essential skills to promote rights awareness and mitigate violence against women and girls. UNHCR's role in drafting Panama's Public Policy on Opportunities for Women (2023-2033) ensured comprehensive support for refugee women. This policy empowers them, prevents violence, and includes measures on human mobility, guaranteeing their rights for the first time in a gender equality policy. UNHCR enabled refugees to meet basic needs, access essential services, and integrate into communities by providing direct assistance and livelihood support, reducing their vulnerability, and fostering self-reliance. UNHCR helped refugees and asylum-seekers integrate into local economies and achieve financial independence by providing marketable skills and promoting entrepreneurship. Advocacy for legal reforms and employment opportunities has been fundamental for refugees to access formal job markets and contribute to their host communities. Educational support and integration programmes equipped individuals with the knowledge and resources needed to thrive in their new environments. The delivery of psychosocial support and mental health services allowed them to address the trauma of displacement, promoting emotional well-being and social cohesion.

UNHCR's resettlement programme had a transformative impact on the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers. Interventions facilitated the processing and medical checks, ensuring 335 were resettled during the year. Despite some individuals being unable to travel, UNHCR's efforts to update and monitor cases with local integration prospects provided long-term solutions. The submission of cases, including individuals with urgent medical and life-threatening needs, not only offered solutions to the most vulnerable refugees but also strengthened the protection environment in the region. In 2024, UNHCR identified, interviewed, and submitted for consideration resettlement cases of 1,176 individuals based on specific protection criteria. These efforts ensured that forcibly displaced and stateless people could achieve the most appropriate durable solutions in safety and dignity.

Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual(2024)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	75.04%	33.60%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	87.70%	97.66%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	53.02%	66.04%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	38.81%	44.12%
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	21%	11%
3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark			
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	58.56%	57.26%

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

The primary barriers and challenges impacting forcibly displaced and stateless people's access to comprehensive protection and their ability to achieve durable solutions in safety and dignity were multifaceted. In some countries, the absence of a formalized system for processing asylum claims and providing protection left refugees and asylum-seekers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Limited awareness among local stakeholders exacerbated these issues, making it challenging to ensure that the rights and needs of forcibly displaced individuals are adequately addressed.

Limited institutional capacity and lack of accessible legal pathways were also significant obstacles. In many countries, insufficient resources and inadequate training for officials hamper the effective processing of asylum claims and the provision of necessary legal assistance, resulting in protection gaps and service delays and leaving many individuals in precarious situations.

In the MCO area of responsibility, political and policy shifts, along with bureaucratic delays, created an unstable environment for refugees and asylum-seekers. Inconsistent immigration practices and a lack of cohesive legal frameworks for integration further complicate efforts to provide comprehensive protection. These challenges are exacerbated by political sensitivities and elections, which often divert attention and resources away from addressing the needs of forcibly displaced populations.

Social exclusion and economic barriers significantly hindered the integration and long-term stability of refugees and asylum-seekers. Cultural norms, stigma, and discrimination contribute to social isolation, while limited access to formal employment and essential services such as healthcare and education restrict opportunities for self-reliance and community participation.

Growing funding constraints further limited the reach and effectiveness of support programs designed to assist refugees and asylum-seekers. In Trinidad and Tobago for example, there remains a substantial gap in the provision of psychosocial support for forcibly displaced persons due to insufficient funding.

Additionally, in Aruba, direct support has been significantly reduced while livelihoods interventions have been entirely deprioritized. This has limited the ability of forcibly displaced people to meet certain basic needs and generate income, hindering their local integration.

To overcome the barriers faced by forcibly displaced and stateless individuals, it will be essential to keep strengthening institutional capacity through improved training and resources for officials handling asylum claims and legal assistance. Developing cohesive legal frameworks for integration and protection can support and address inconsistent immigration practices and provide accessible legal pathways. Raising awareness among local stakeholders about the rights and needs of these individuals can further help reduce exploitation and abuse. Additionally, strategic engagement with policymakers and stakeholders will be crucial to navigate political and policy shifts, ensuring a stable environment for refugees and asylum-

seekers.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

To ensure an adequate response in providing protection and humanitarian assistance to people forced to flee, UNHCR worked with 22 specialized national and international partners with different expertise in child protection, shelter, community interventions, humanitarian assistance, livelihoods, case management, protection of forcibly displaced people with specific needs, health, and legal assistance, among others. UNHCR co-led the response for Venezuelans (R4V), the Sub-Regional Caribbean Platform, and the National R4V Platform in Panama. R4V partners provided refugees and migrants with shelter, food, relief items, direct support to cover basic needs, and protection services, strengthening the coordination of the R4V National Platforms, and enabling joint assessments and data collection in five countries. A coherent response was achieved through oversight of information management exercises, reporting products, protection materials, public information and external relations activities produced regularly, bi-weekly internal periodic coordination meetings with the national platforms, coordination of the annual RMNA and RMRP planning process, support to the joint needs assessments, implementation and yearly monitoring of the RMRP regional response. In the framework of the R4V in Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR and IOM met quarterly in a forum called Humanitarian Breakfast Series to engage with the Government, Embassies, UN, civil society, and private sector and address the needs of forcibly displaced people. During 2024, the initiative saw increasing participation. One of the achievements is successfully enrolling Venezuelan refugee children into the national education system. In 2024, the initiative facilitated the admission of the first cohort of 63 children into public schools. This milestone was achieved through the combined efforts of UN agencies, civil society organizations, and the government, highlighting the commitment to inclusive education and the rights of refugee children.

Under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator, UNHCR and IOM co-lead the Human Mobility Group (HMG) in Panama, an interagency working group supporting the government's humanitarian response to migrants and refugees, particularly in Darien and Chiriquí. In 2024, UNHCR enhanced the coordination, resource optimization, humanitarian aid, and protection with a dedicated team. The team assessed information needs and sector priorities through consultations and bilateral discussions, standardizing data across major agencies. They produced a 2024 humanitarian support snapshot for Darien, presented at an interministerial session to improve transparency and alignment. The team supported HMG meetings, scenario-planning, and missions to Darién, identifying coordination opportunities and establishing systematic communication channels that strengthened links between local and national actors. In 2024, Belize chaired the MIRPS pro tempore presidency, enhancing support for asylum-seekers and refugees. With UNHCR's support, Belize fulfilled its protection, education, health, livelihoods, and social security commitments. The country led the MIRPS regional action plan, participated in capacity development workshops, reactivated its National Technical Team, and established a National Action Plan for 2024-2026. As part of its commitments under MIRPS, with the Amnesty Programme, the Government has provided thousands, including nearly 500 asylum-seekers, with an alternative regularization pathway and permanent residency.

UNHCR continued collaborating with UN agencies and partners through Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, sub-working groups, and UN Country Teams. The Agency also engaged with national human rights institutions, the judiciary, and academia across the MCO's area of responsibility, achieving significant progress. Advocacy initiatives included partnerships with the University of Panama and UNACHI in Panama, Chiriquí, and Darien, as well as awareness sessions on international protection with the University of Guyana. UNHCR coordinated with the University of Aruba and other human rights organizations for the launch of a law clinic, and in Curaçao, UNHCR engaged with several government officials by organizing roundtable events to discuss the application of human rights principles. These efforts fostered dialogue and collaboration by bringing together legal experts and human rights activists, thereby strengthening the application and awareness of international human rights obligations.

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 (2024)	Actual (2024)
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99%	100.00%	100.00%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
01.1.1 Number of people registered on an individual basis		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	165
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	46
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	125
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	256
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	687
Suriname	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	625
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5,202
01.2.1 Number of people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	201
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	124

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, UNHCR MCO Panama provided counselling and legal assistance to over 36,000 refugees and asylum-seekers under its area of responsibility to facilitate their access to asylum and fundamental rights. In 2023, more than 22,000 refugees and asylum seekers were attended. This support significantly improved their access to territory and documentation, enhancing their safety, legal status, and long-term integration. In Belize, UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, local communities, and the Government, provided legal assistance to 718 asylum-seekers and led initiatives to enhance the identification of people needing international protection, including those at Belize's Detention Center. The Agency organized mobile documentation clinics nationwide, assisting over 350 people with birth registration applications, information on access to documentation, and counselling for Amnesty Programme applicants. Among the 492 Amnesty beneficiaries approved under asylum-seeker criteria, UNHCR covered the costs of the permanent residency IDs for 171, supporting their access to essential public services, secure employment, and stability. UNHCR

trained 58 government officials, including 24 police officers appointed at border areas, and developed referral mechanisms, which played a crucial role in identifying asylum-seekers and ensuring their access to protection services.

In Panama, UNHCR digitalized over 1,000 asylum files, trained over 700 government officials on international protection, and improved asylum case management systems. A key focus has been the exhaustive review of thousands of archives conducted by ONPAR and UNHCR. This meticulous effort allowed ONPAR to uncover thousands of physical files of cases pending decisions from previous years that had been lost due to archival tracking gaps. Thanks to UNHCR, the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) opened a border branch in Darien, and UNHCR's advocacy in Chiriquí enabled the Agency to join COPPAMI, a national commission to protect foreign nationals in vulnerable situations. Under the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), UNHCR and the Government of Aruba collaborated to enhance the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) system. The Agency provided technical assistance and engaged with local authorities to develop policies and strategies aligned with international refugee law standards. This collaboration revised the asylum procedure and strengthened institutional capacity. In Curaçao, UNHCR brought together legal experts and government officials to discuss the application of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and facilitated the country's participation in the Cartagena + 40, promoting local and regional collaboration on refugee protection and strengthening the application of international standards on access to asylum.

Thanks to UNHCR's advocacy, authorities in Guyana continued to issue renewable stay permits to forcibly displaced Venezuelans. Since 2018, officials have issued over 23,000 permits, ensuring legal stability and access to fundamental services. UNHCR registered 320 individuals for case management, providing personalized legal, health, and social services support. UNHCR's partnership with the University of Guyana fostered awareness of refugee protection, preparing future generations of legal and humanitarian professionals to build a protection culture.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR registered 5,545 asylum-seekers and provided them with documentation to access essential services and protection. The Agency introduced the 'Verify Plus' system to confirm the authenticity of UNHCR IDs, enhancing refugees' legal security. UNHCR counseled over 600 individuals, trained 448 government officials on international protection, and resumed meetings with the Ministry of National Security, which had been suspended since 2019.

In Suriname, despite the absence of a formal asylum system, UNHCR's advocacy with the government has laid the groundwork for future improvements in refugee protection. In 2024, the Agency registered 632 people, enabling them to access documentation and essential services.

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 Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	54%	95%	91%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
04.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from specialized GBV programmes		
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	45
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,319
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	497
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	178

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, UNHCR MCO Panama took a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women and girls. Together with partners, the Agency collaborated to ensure survivors received critical support while continuing to work to strengthen prevention and response systems. As such, the proportion of people who know where to access available specialized services increased from 54% to 91%, mainly due to personalized case management, availability of health and psychosocial support services, awareness campaigns conducted with partners and frontline services providers, workshops and events to promote safe spaces for vulnerable groups, outreach activities to support women engaged in the selling and exchange of sex, and collaboration with governments to foster cross-border cooperation to address issues of violence against women and girls and trafficking, among others.

In Guyana, UNHCR, HIAS, and Shades of the Sky supported 1,319 individuals, including 82 violence survivors who received personalized case management for sexual and physical abuse. The Agency trained 35 frontline service providers and, with the University of Guyana, conducted an online lecture during the 16 Days of Activism, raising awareness and equipping practitioners with essential skills to address violence against women and girls.

In Panama, UNHCR engaged almost 600 people in initiatives to raise awareness on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. This included refugees, asylum-seekers, and Government officials trained on response strategies, contributing to strengthening the national protection framework. UNHCR participated in drafting the new Public Policy on Opportunities for Women for the years 2023-2033. This is the first time a governmental policy on gender equality includes measures on human mobility, guaranteeing refugee women's rights protection. In Darién, UNHCR coordinated with local authorities to improve public safety measures, such as better lighting in high-risk areas and reducing risks of violence. The Agency enhanced medical care, case management, and psychosocial support services for survivors, and participated in the inter-agency reactivation of a Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Working Group, and the establishment of a local working group to strengthen the response and prevention of violence against women and girls.

In Aruba, UNHCR engaged key sectors through workshops, events, and campaigns, creating safe spaces for vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+ individuals. Collaborations with the Gender National Commission (GNC) and local organizations like Fundación Contra Violencia Relacional (FCVR) improved the Agency's overall response. In Curaçao, UNHCR supported the launch of the Girl Shine Programme, equipping community members with skills to better respond to violence against women and girls. UNHCR also conducted outreach activities to support women engaged in the selling and exchange of sex and trained 50 officials and other humanitarian actors on preventing LGBTIQ+ discrimination. These efforts collectively empowered survivors, prevented violence, and fostered a supportive environment.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR enhanced case management for 178 survivors and trained 76 government officials and partners on the prevention of violence against women and girls, risk mitigation, and response. UNHCR and the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) collaborated to ensure that survivors and victims of trafficking received protection. They fostered cross-border cooperation to address the interconnected issues of violence against women and girls and trafficking. During the 16 Days of Activism, the Agency organized a storytelling and photography workshop that provided survivors with a platform to share their experiences, promote empowerment, and raise awareness on both national and regional levels.

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 (2024)	Actual (2024)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4%	25%	19%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	84
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	218
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	170
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	338
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,150
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	500
08.2.1 Number of people who received non-food items		
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	478
Panama	Host Community	9,600
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12,019

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, UNHCR's efforts in the MCO region significantly improved the well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers by focusing on meeting immediate needs, providing humanitarian support, and building resilience. In 2024, the proportion of people that received direct support and/or non-food items reached 19%, while in 2023, it was 5%. Through a combination of direct assistance to cover basic needs and psychosocial support, UNHCR fostered long-term solutions, ensuring refugees' access to essential services and opportunities to rebuild their lives.

In Belize, UNHCR provided subsistence support to 218 refugees and asylum-seekers to cover their basic needs, guaranteeing access to essential services and integration into their host communities. This support reached 32 refugee and asylum-seeking households in Aruba, totalling 84 people. It supported their self-reliance and enabled them to make their own financial decisions. Despite challenging economic conditions in Cuba, UNHCR provided direct support to 170 people to cover food, medicine, and shelter. In Guyana, UNHCR provided 478 people with relief items and direct support to cover their immediate needs, enhancing their overall resilience. UNHCR also delivered farming tools to 20 Indigenous Warao families at risk of food insecurity, reducing their reliance on humanitarian aid.

In Panama and Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR's subsistence support empowered refugees to regain stability in their lives, notably for violence survivors or those facing medical conditions. In Panama, 715 benefited from direct assistance to cover survival needs, and in Trinidad and Tobago, the Agency reached 500 people. UNHCR's partnership with the Family Planning Association of this country led to the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for managing the delivery of material assistance ensuring transparency and effectiveness in the delivery.

UNHCR ensured that assistance reached those who needed it the most through regular monitoring, home visits, and follow-ups. A post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercise confirmed that 54% of the recipients reported an improvement in their living conditions due to the assistance. Additionally, 95 % confirmed that the support helped them stabilize and meet their priority needs.

UNHCR prioritized psychosocial support and mental health services to help individuals recover from the hardships of forced displacement. In Panama, UNHCR provided mental health assistance to over 3,200 people, fostering emotional resilience and social cohesion. In Belize, UNHCR partners Help for Progress and HUMANA People to People provided psychosocial support and access to health services to nearly 90 refugees and asylum-seekers.

In Curaçao, UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in the national healthcare system, leading to improved healthcare access for refugees and asylum-seekers through primary and maternal care services. Through partner Salú pa Tur, UNHCR provided essential healthcare services to

3,636 people and advocated for equitable healthcare access for all, including undocumented individuals. This effort contributed to a more inclusive and comprehensive healthcare system.

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 (2024)	Actual (2024)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	114	100	115
Trinidad and Tobago	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	422	720	708

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents		
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 2024, UNHCR resettlement programme impacted hundreds of refugees and asylum-seekers across the region. UNHCR submitted 1,176 refugees for resettlement consideration, and 337 were resettled during the year.

In Cuba, UNHCR facilitated the processing and medical checks for 60 individuals, ensuring that 17 were resettled during the year and 21 more were scheduled for early 2025. Although 23 individuals could not travel despite prior approval, UNHCR efforts to update and monitor cases with local integration prospects helped provide long-term solutions, such as two refugees who are now eligible for permanent residency in Cuba through marriage to Cuban citizens.

In Panama, after years of no referrals from this area, UNHCR placed four families on the resettlement waiting list, marking a significant milestone. The Agency submitted cases of 115 people for resettlement to the United States of America in 2024, surpassing the annual quota of 100 people. In May, Panama received its first US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) mission since the start of the resettlement programme in 2022. The mission resulted in a remarkable 97% acceptance rate, demonstrating the success of UNHCR targeted support in providing safety and stability to those most in need.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR submitted cases of 708 people, primarily women at risk, people with legal and physical protection concerns, and those with urgent medical and life-threatening needs. This offered a solution to the most vulnerable refugees and immediate protection against refoulement, following increased deportations after refoulement events in response to the 2023 Court ruling.

UNHCR submitted cases of 353 people from Aruba and Curacao for resettlement consideration in 2024.

The operation received its first resettlement quota from Canada since the start of the resettlement programme in Aruba in 2022. The absence of local integration prospects meant that resettlement served as a solution for those without access to regular status, services, or employment and a protection intervention for persons at risk of detention and deportation.

In 2024, UNHCR identified, interviewed, and submitted cases of 1,176 individuals for resettlement consideration from operations under MCO Panama. From this group, 39% were girls, boys, and adolescents; 53 per cent were women, and 47 per cent were men. In terms of protection needs, 23 per cent were primarily identified as women at risk; 24 per cent were survivors of violence or torture; 52 per cent were individuals with other legal and/or physical protection needs. Most refugees considered for resettlement were from Venezuela and Colombia.

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

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land				
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	23%	35%	24%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
16.1.1. Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Partially
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
16.2.1 Number of people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	171
Panama	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2024, in Panama, 24% of individuals attended live in households with tenure security, up from 23% in 2023. This means three out of four asylum seekers and refugees still live without secure tenure rights. Over

half of the population lacks official documentation for land or property rights. Those with secure tenure typically rent with formal contracts and have direct relationships with property owners, supported by UNHCR and partners through direct support conditioned on secure tenure. Financial struggles, especially rent payments, create uncertainty about staying in their homes.

In Aruba and Curaçao, UNHCR funded, coordinated, and supported various initiatives to foster social cohesion and raise rights awareness. With HIAS, local community leaders, CEDE Aruba, Bos di Hubentut, and PSI Skuchami, UNHCR contributed to protecting and integrating forcibly displaced people in both countries.

In Aruba, UNHCR backed the 'WAW Mobiel' initiative, a mobile hub providing recreational and educational activities for children, creating safe spaces for learning and sports. In Curaçao, UNHCR supported Venezuelan artists who produced a film series on the challenges faced by forcibly displaced groups, reaching over 10,000 viewers globally, raising awareness of refugees' and asylum-seekers' experiences and amplifying their voices.

In Belize, UNHCR assisted 174 asylum-seekers and refugees through livelihoods and economic integration initiatives. A total of 492 asylum-seekers had their amnesty approved, enhancing their long-term stability. The Agency's border missions and outreach efforts reached over 1,700 individuals, fostering greater awareness of refugee rights and facilitating integration through activities like sports, cultural sessions, and World Refugee Day.

In Guyana, UNHCR's partnership with the Ministry of Education enabled the integration of 845 children into after-school English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, directly impacting their ability to integrate into the host community. The programme trained 30 teachers and provided educational materials, enhancing language skills and educational outcomes for both forcibly displaced children and host communities. Social activities, such as the Spanglish Bee competition and sports events, fostered unity among forcibly displaced people and their host communities. UNHCR's missions also provided 5,190 people with knowledge of essential rights, helping them achieve integration. UNHCR provided case management for 1,833 people, granting them the necessary tools to access basic services and promote local integration.

In Panama, UNHCR and partner NRC provided legal orientation and support on housing rights, including drafting rental contracts, advocating to prevent evictions, and emergency financial support. As per the 2024 Results Monitoring Survey, 41% of refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama have secure tenure rights to their housing or land. UNHCR's advocacy made significant progress in facilitating refugees' access to employment and public healthcare and education services. The Agency liaised with the Ministries of Education (MEDUCA), Health (MINSA), and the Social Security Fund (CSS) to create a more inclusive environment, benefitting both refugees and host communities. UNHCR's employment and entrepreneurship programmes supported 253 refugees and asylum-seekers, helping them integrate into the labour market and contributing to local economies. Collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Labour (MITRADEL), led to a law exempting refugees from foreign employment quotas, enhancing employment opportunities and creating sustainable paths to self-reliance, linking Panama's labour policies with refugee inclusion.

In Trinidad and Tobago, UNHCR supported 63 refugee children in accessing the national education system for the first time, providing them with school kits, tablets, and uniforms. This not only supported their educational aspirations but also promoted social cohesion. Equal Place, UNHCR and UNICEF's alternative education platform, reached 1,774 children, including refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition, 78 individuals participated in accredited skills training and small business development programmes, which directly facilitated their inclusion in the workforce of local restaurants, pharmacies, bakeries, and construction sites. In the framework of World Refugee Day, UNHCR organized a series of events that brought together refugees, the host community, and key stakeholders to advocate for better integration policies.

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol				
Aruba	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Belize	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Cuba	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Curacao	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Guyana	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned

Panama	N/A	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment
Suriname	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Trinidad and Tobago	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness				
Aruba	N/A	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment
Belize	N/A	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
Cuba	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Curacao	N/A	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment	Progressing towards alignment
Guyana	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Panama	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Suriname	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned
Trinidad and Tobago	N/A	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned	Broadly aligned

Other Core Output Indicators

Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24
07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback & response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback		
Aruba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	123
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	312
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	276
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	199
09.1.1 Number of people who received shelter and housing assistance		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	41
10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	31
Curacao	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,636
10.2.1 Number of consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	57
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	101
11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming		
Cuba	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	61
Guyana	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	845
13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions		
Belize	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	174

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

(a) AGD Inclusive programming, including disaggregation of data, disability inclusion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)

UNHCR's AGD approach ensures that programming is inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse populations. Data disaggregated by age, gender, diversity, and nationality is used to plan and tailor interventions effectively. Profiling exercises and needs assessments, involving focus group discussions, inform these targeted interventions.

All indicators and data-gathering tools are disaggregated by age and gender, which is crucial for designing effective protection strategies. This disaggregation allows for a nuanced understanding of the population's needs and ensures that interventions are appropriately targeted. UNHCR is committed to ensuring that individuals with specific needs receive appropriate assistance. Through collaborations with key partners and direct implementation, UNHCR integrates disability considerations into protection responses. For instance, the scorecard assessment for direct support to cover basic needs ensures that those with disabilities receive equitable assistance. Active outreach and connections with LGBTIQ+ organizations have positioned UNHCR as a leader in the protection of these people at heightened risks. Training sessions for humanitarian workers on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, and safe disclosure of incidents through an AGD lens have improved the overall response to these issues. This also ensured that UNHCR and its partners are better equipped with the knowledge to support the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals at heightened risk of violence.

(b) Participation and Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People

UNHCR has made significant strides in improving the participation and inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people. The involvement of the affected population is ensured from the onset of program planning through diverse participatory tools such as consultations, focus group discussions, virtual sessions, and community mapping. Protection monitoring efforts have reached a substantial number of forcibly displaced people, helping to understand their specific needs better using an AGD approach. Initiatives such as International Women's Day, World Refugee Day, and the 16 Days of Activism on violence against women and girls have engaged diverse groups, including men, women, adolescents, and children, raising awareness and fostering community engagement. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring all groups' full participation and inclusion. In remote areas, the lack of adequate and timely documentation can hamper access to essential services, highlighting the need for continued dedication and resources.

C) Commitment to Women and Girls and Gender Equality

UNHCR interventions have been coordinated with partners to provide essential response services to violence survivors. Specific case management processes are in place for women at risk, children, and adolescents, ensuring that assistance is tailored to mitigate additional risks and prevent further harm. UNHCR has led various initiatives to empower women and girls, such as skills training and livelihood opportunities. In Trinidad and Tobago, 45 women participated in skills training initiatives with UNHCR partner PADF, and 2,770 women and girls received UNHCR registration documentation, ensuring free movement, access to rights, independence, and individual safety. Youth mentoring and leadership initiatives have integrated young refugees and asylum seekers with local youth, resulting in projects that raise awareness and foster community engagement.

The implementation of the AGD policy has seen significant progress across various countries. UNHCR has worked to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, LGBTIQ persons at risk of violence, and persons with disabilities. Collaborations with key partners, agencies, and NGOs have ensured that gender and age considerations are integrated into protection activities. Training sessions for humanitarian workers on violence against women and girls and safe disclosure through an AGD lens have been conducted, improving the overall response to these issues.

Section 3: Resources

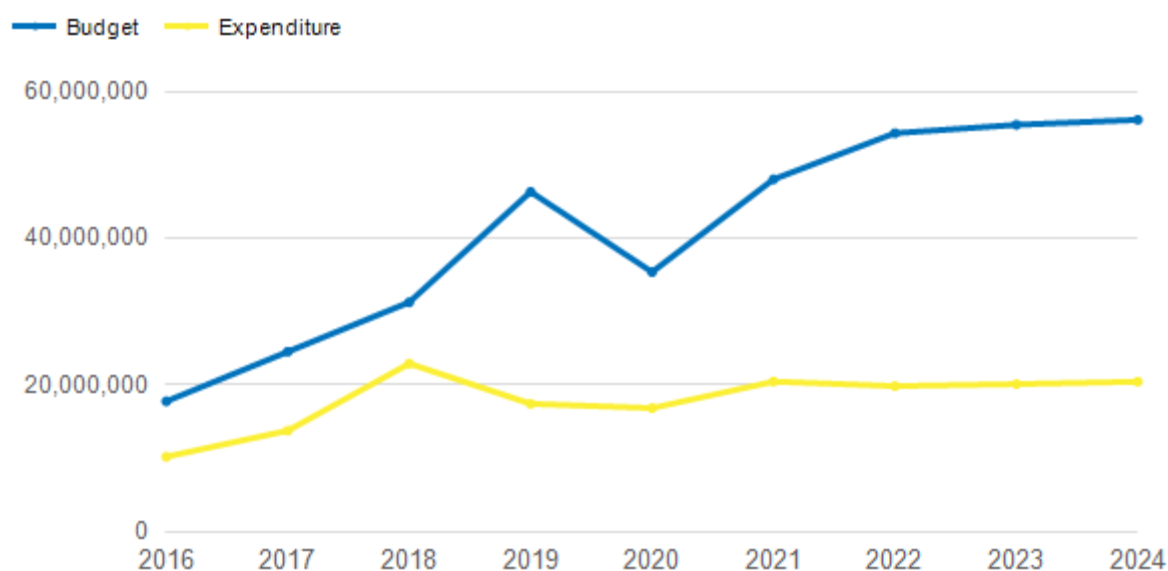
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

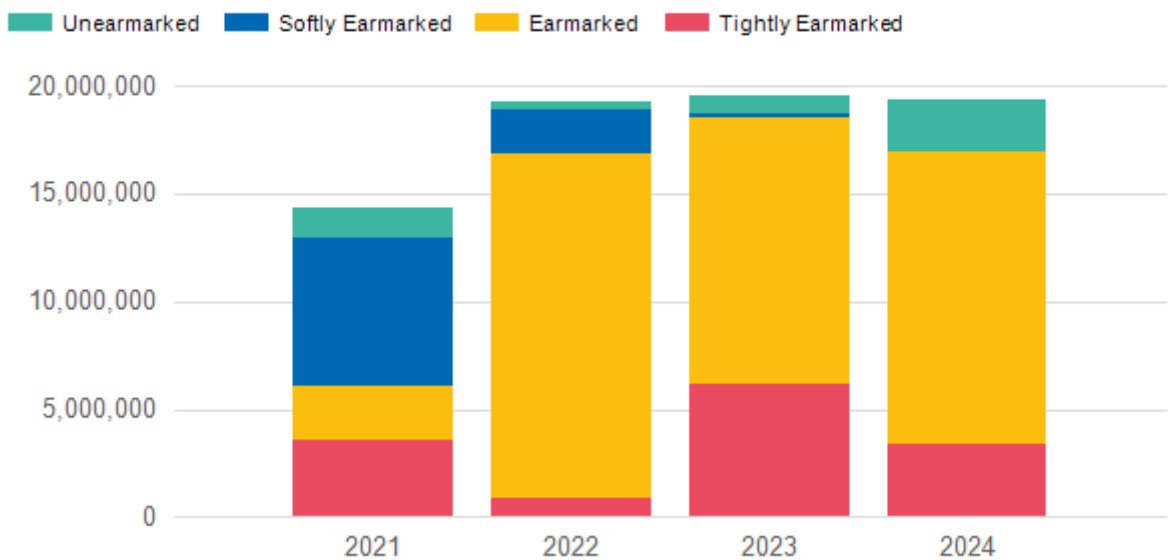
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	19,185,172	6,967,040	36.31%	6,888,703	98.88%
IA4: Solve	36,941,149	13,560,302	36.71%	13,560,302	100.00%
All Impact Areas		287,101			
Total	56,126,322	20,814,443	37.08%	20,449,005	98.24%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	19,185,172	6,967,040	36.31%	6,888,703	98.88%
OA4: GBV	7,556,450	2,630,555	34.81%	2,630,554	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	10,864,520	4,439,963	40.87%	4,439,963	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	5,602,934	2,186,344	39.02%	2,186,344	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	12,917,245	4,303,441	33.32%	4,303,441	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		287,101			
Total	56,126,321	20,814,443	37.08%	20,449,005	98.24%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

- In 2024, MCO Panama received contributions of 33% of budgeted needs for the year. Funding gaps significantly hindered the delivery of direct assistance to meet survival needs for forcibly displaced persons in Aruba, Belize, and Trinidad & Tobago. Income generating through sustainable livelihoods interventions remain a significant unmet need for people UNHCR protects in Guyana, Panama, and Trinidad & Tobago. In addition, many children in Aruba, Guyana, Panama and Trinidad & Tobago faced unattended educational support or even were unable to access education as interventions in such area were very limited or even fully de-prioritized.
- 74% of the contributions received were earmarked to a country or region, such as Southern Caribbean, allowing UNHCR to allocate the funds per the strategic priorities. For example, UNHCR was able to complement tightly earmarked contributions to support Belize’s Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). In Aruba and Curacao, where UNHCR received a generous contribution from Dutch Postcode Lottery, UNHCR was able to put more resources into implementing activities to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, work closely with the communities, and provide legal assistance and counselling. Very importantly, UNHCR hopes to leverage the partnership with the Dutch Postcode Lottery to reach a broader audience in the Netherlands and raise awareness on the situation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, of which both islands are members.
- Tighter resource allocation meant that UNHCR could not prioritize some vulnerable, forcibly displaced, and stateless persons in providing direct assistance to meet survival needs and protection services, such as case management and accompaniment. UNHCR had to collect the information less frequently in some countries and de-prioritize other countries it oversees. MCO Panama will continue to advocate for flexible funding fundraising that would allow to allocate resources in diverse countries or regions addressing many unmet needs.
- 22 per cent of the total budget in 2024 was implemented through national and international partners.
- UNHCR was able to support national partner Fundación Espacio Juvenil in receiving funds directly from the Embassy of Portugal, which complemented the campaign ‘TechNOviolence’ an initiative where technology and art combine to raise awareness on violence against women in the digital environment in Panama, promoting changes in public policies and attitudes.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Improving Coordination and Collaboration: Effective coordination and collaboration between various agencies and stakeholders are crucial to enhance inter-institutional coordination and for efficient and cohesive responses. As demonstrated in Panama, clarifying coordination structures and roles helps achieve strategic results and avoid duplication.

Fostering Community Engagement and Social Inclusion: Community engagement and social inclusion are key to reducing stigma and promoting harmony. Implementing community-based protection strategies in Cuba, strengthening engagement with indigenous communities in Guyana, and fostering community engagement through awareness campaigns and projects in Panama have proven beneficial. These efforts help build a sense of inclusion and understanding, which is crucial for social cohesion.

Advocacy and Specialized Support: Continuous advocacy and specialized support are necessary for driving policy changes and protecting vulnerable populations. Continuous advocacy in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago has led to significant policy changes and increased opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers. Providing specialized attention to refugees and tailoring services to meet their unique needs are essential for adequate support and integration. Limited visibility of UNHCR and its role significantly affects outreach and support efforts. Increasing strategic partnerships and public engagement through community events, workshops, and information sessions can help directly engage with the public and displaced populations, fostering a better understanding of UNHCR's mission and services. Additionally, enhancing advocacy efforts through media campaigns, social media platforms, and public relations initiatives can raise awareness about UNHCR's mandate, the challenges forcibly displaced people face, and the support available to them.



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