

PANAMA

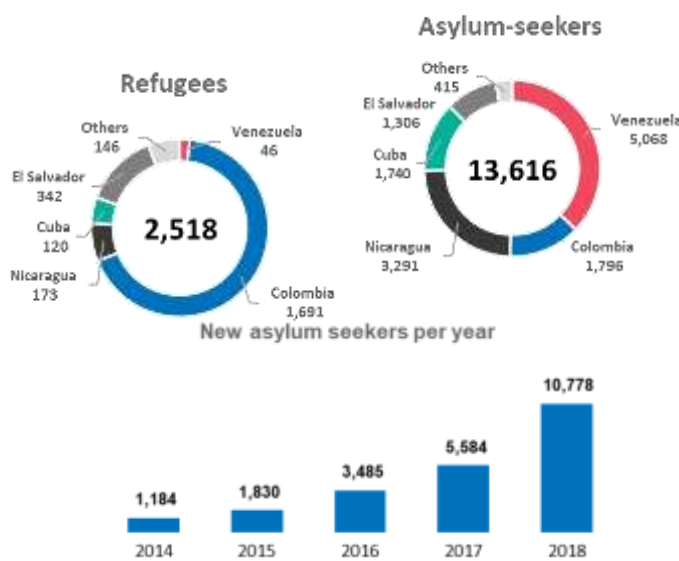
March 2019

Panama is home to **+16,100** refugees and asylum-seekers. **94,400** refugees and migrants from Venezuela are estimated to be living in the country.

66 persons were provided with legal orientation and assistance between January and March 2019.

224 refugees and asylum-seekers households were supported through CBI and multipurpose grants between January and March 2019.

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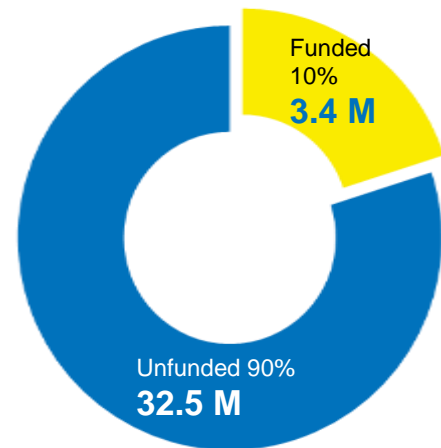


Source: based on data provided by ONPAR up to December 2018.

FUNDING APRIL 2019

USD 35.9 M

requested for the Central America situation



"I love cooking, taking one recipe and making it my own"

Honduran asylum-seeker Ciria (left) cooked alongside Venezuelan chef, Maga (right), at La Mesa restaurant in Panama City to mark International Women's Day. Ciria is part of the Urban Garden project supported by UNHCR in Panama.



Working with Partners

- Panama officially agreed to participate in the MIRPS (Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework) in July 2017. After the consultation process, over 30 commitments were agreed to strengthen protection and promote durable solutions.
- UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies and refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama. UNHCR has established partnership agreements with different national and international organizations, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, RET, HIAS, the Human Mobility Pastoral (PMH) the Panamanian Red Cross, the refugee Education Trust (RET) and Programa Enlaces (Fundación Espacio Creativo). Also, a Partnership Agreement with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) was established to channel support and continue strengthening the asylum system in the country.
- In order to promote a whole society approach, UNHCR is engaging with municipalities, other local actors and the private sector to promote durable solutions and peaceful coexistence. Since the middle of 2018, this has been reinforced within the framework of the MIRPS process and several local alliances were established, including with the National Vocational Training Institute (INADEH) and a private micro-credit institution, MICROSERFIN to allow refugees to access small loans for livelihood opportunities.
- UNHCR also works in close coordination with government institutions, namely with the ONPAR, part of the Ministry of Interior, and with the National Commission for Refugee Protection, the child protection office, border police, national institution for women protection and the Ombudsman Office. These alliances are equally reinforced at municipality level, as is the case in Darien province.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR works with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees and the National Commission for Refugee Protection to strengthen the asylum system including access to territory and to effective legal remedies for persons of concern. Technical and material support is been provided as well as human resources (lawyers) to assist ONPAR in processing of individual cases.
- **A session with lawyers** from ONPAR has been conducted to strengthen the capacities of national counterparts in charge of refugee status determination. Trainings focused in International Refugee Law and principles, RSD, Country of Origin Information and interview techniques.
- UNHCR participated in a Seminar on International Protection organized by its partner HIAS for **over 80 University students**. The workshop aimed to raise awareness on the protection and promotion of refugees and asylum seekers' rights. UNHCR moderated 2 of the 3 working tables where students discussed case studies on North of Central America, Venezuela and extra-continental people with international protection needs. During the working sessions, measures to improve their access to the refugee status determination procedure and its local integration in Panama were discussed by students.

- **Two border monitoring missions** were conducted by UNHCR to Darien province (border with Colombia) to follow up on the mixed movements and identification of persons with international protection needs. Referral mechanisms were discussed with local migration and border security authorities.

An initial contingency plan was developed in coordination with the different UN agencies foreseeing an increase of mixed movements through Darien province.

- Based on the formal agreement between the Ministry of Interior and the Passport Authority for the processing and issuance of travel documents for recognized refugees, **three refugees received their official travel documents.**

Having a travel document will allow refugees to take advantage of the opportunities to travel to other countries to access educational facilities, to seek family unity or career opportunities. It strengthens their self-sufficiency and allows them to lead a more independent and stable life. On the other hand, it facilitates their safe and regular movement, reducing the risk of irregular movements that can expose us to exploitation, abuse, violence and human trafficking.

- The protection working group was formally established for Panama to enhance coordination and strengthen the protection response between UNHCR and partners. The working group is co-lead by NRC and a work plan, indicating the main results to be achieved for 2019 was agreed upon.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR and partners work towards enhancing the local integration environment for refugees in Panama; inter alia, access to education and vocational training, formal employment, banking services and other public services, including the public health system.

- Through a pilot project between UNHCR and the INADEH, 20 people have been enrolled in INADEH courses as a result of the agreement reached last year. In addition, UNHCR together with the Red Cross has trained the staff of INADEH's local offices in Tocumen, Chorrillo and Chorrera, where refugees will be receiving their courses and training programs.
- A new urban/semi urban home gardening programme for refugees and asylum seekers will be continued this year with Panamanian Red Cross. The project seeks to raise the quality of life, health, of the families identified with as most vulnerable, by increasing the intake of healthy foods, in sufficient quantities and with a balanced diet, as well as generating some family income. A total of 40 families will be benefited in 2019.
- The programme "Talento sin Fronteras", an initiative led by Manpower Group, UNHCR and HIAS aimed to strengthen the opportunities that refugees have for formal employment in the country seeks to benefit 140 refugees this year. Following an alliance with the Mayor's Office of Panama, 70 Panamanians will also be included as beneficiaries of this initiative. The first cohort of 20 refugees and 10 Panamanians have already finished the soft skills courses and are ready to be referred to the private sector for employment opportunities.

- UNHCR and IOM continue implementing the campaign #SomosLoMismo to address discrimination and xenophobia in the country. This campaign targets both local population, as well as refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in order to promote peaceful coexistence and highlight the positive contributions of inclusion and solidarity.

Over 60 university students participated in a psychodrama workshop to address xenophobia held in the framework of the campaign for the Day against Racism and Xenophobia (21 march). During the workshop, students discussed the stereotypes surrounding migrants and refugees in Panama through guided techniques. At the end of the workshop, students were able to see the situations that could lead to stereotypes from another perspective and understand the importance of solidarity and inclusion.

External / Donors Relations

In 2019, UNHCR operations in Central America received earmarked funding from the United States of America, Canada, the European Union, Spain, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and various private donors.

In 2019, UNHCR received unearmarked funding from:

Sweden 90.4 million | **Norway** 44.5 million | **Netherlands** 37.5 million | **United Kingdom** 31.7 million | **Germany** 26.7 million | **Private donors Spain** 26.3 million | **Denmark** 24.4 million | **Switzerland** 15.1 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 10.4 million

CONTACTS

Renee Cuijpers, Deputy Regional Representative
cuijpers@unhcr.org, Tel: +507 304 9652

Angela Florez, Senior Public Information Associate,
florez@unhcr.org, Tel: +507 304 9654

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