



# CASE FOR SUPPORT

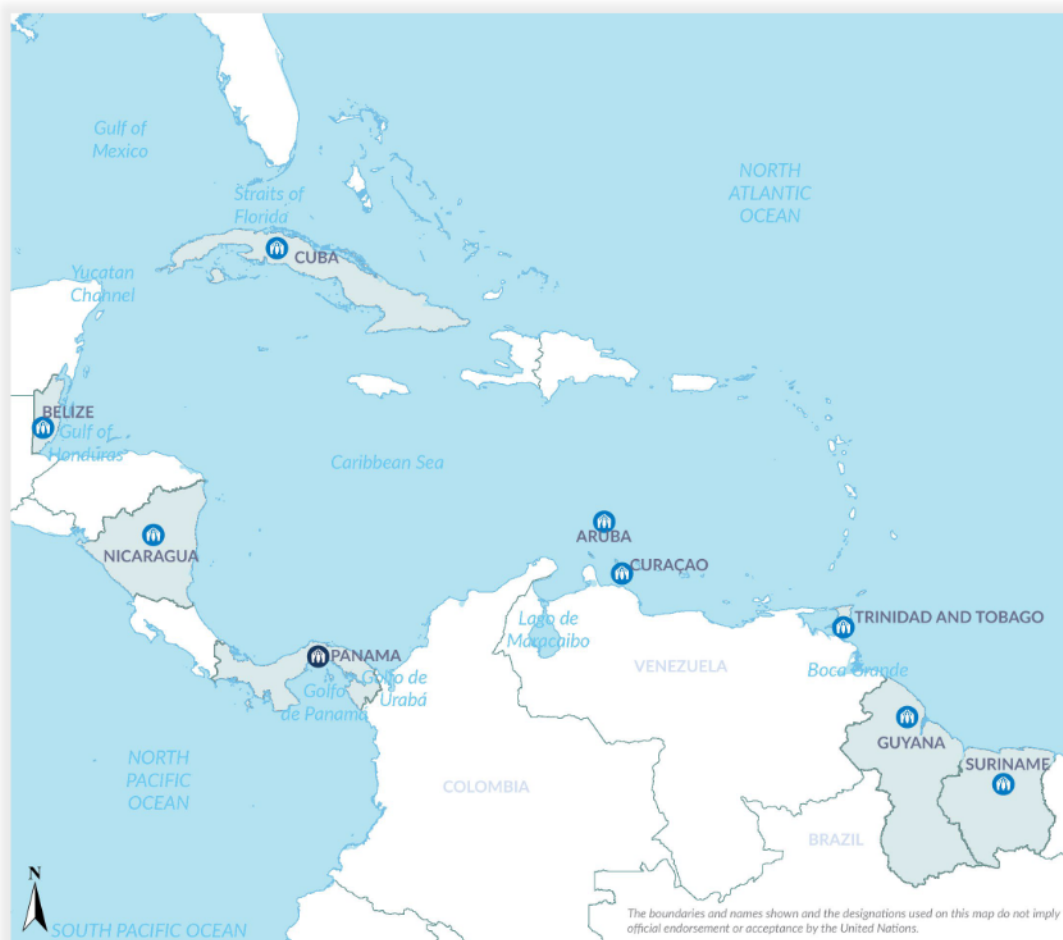
**MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE IN PANAMA**

**(BELIZE, CUBA, PANAMA, NICARAGUA, AND SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN)**

*Cover Photograph: Elicia and her family left Colombia in 2006 after their hometown, Bojayá, Chocó, was threatened by armed groups. All members of the family were recognized as refugees in Panama in 2007 and received their first IDs, which had to be renovated every year. But because they live in remote areas in Darien, their documents expired and lack access basic rights, like formal jobs, health, and education. Photo credit: UNHCR/Diana Diaz*

## Operational Context: Where does UNHCR work in the Subregion?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on already vulnerable populations, including refugees and asylum-seekers. During the health crisis, increased forced displacement and irregular cross-border movements, a rise in xenophobia and stigmatization, alongside disruption of basic services, have paired with access constraints both to protection and solutions. Moreover, the constant arrival of refugees, asylum-seekers, and other displaced people to countries under the Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama continues to place great strains on host and transit communities and puts them at risk of increasing already existing vulnerabilities and deficiencies.



Forced displacement trends in the countries covered by the MCO Panama are mostly derived from the following countries: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, as well as people from countries within or outside the region traveling among mixed movements.

**Venezuela Situation (VenSit).** The situation in Venezuela has become one of the major humanitarian crises in this century, and it continues to create large movements of refugees and migrants. Venezuelans displaced abroad is the largest group of persons of concern for the operations under MCO Panama, making up 70% of the total population of concern in Aruba, Curaçao, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. In Panama, Venezuelans make up the second highest number of asylum-seekers currently pending recognition from the government, preceded only by Nicaraguans. Moreover, in 2022, Venezuelans are expected to continue traveling irregularly to the Caribbean or through the Darien Gap in search of safety and a new beginning.

*UNHCR continues to advocate for alternative solutions to detention and deportation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and offers support to continue implementing good and effective practices already piloted across the region.*

**Nicaragua Situation.** In 2022, refugee and asylum-seeker are expected to continue fleeing Nicaragua, reaching levels similar to those in 2018, considering the ongoing social and political crisis that has been heightened by the negative economic impact of the pandemic. The results of the presidential elections in November 2021, and the constant context of harassment, political persecution, and crackdown on government opposition is also expected to continue. As a result, Panama is the asylum country with the second highest number of Nicaraguan asylum-seekers in Central America, after Costa Rica.

**North of Central America (NCA).** Threats from criminal gangs, widespread violence, persecution, climate change and disasters, as well as extreme poverty exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to drive displacement from countries in northern Central America in 2022, notably Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Although the majority seek to move northward, many look for protection in Belize and Panama, where they can rebuild their lives in safety.

**Mixed Movements.** In 2021, refugees and asylum-seekers continued to embark on dangerous journeys – including by sea – and faced extreme risks during irregular border crossings in search of safety. Mixed movements are expected to increase in 2022 due to worsening socioeconomic and political environments in countries of origin and border reopening across the region. In the case of Panama, 2021 closed with a total of 133,726 people having entered through the Darien Gap, only 51 of whom filed an asylum claim in the country; the others continued their transit northward. Although entries through the Darien are not new, these mixed movements have increased exponentially in magnitude, level of risk, and precariousness in 2021, registering the largest number on record yet. With ongoing instability across the region, the trend is expected to continue in 2022, with the flows made up mostly of Cubans and Haitians, as well as Venezuelans. In Panama, UNHCR will continue to co-lead the Human Mobility Working Group together with IOM to promote complementary protection responses and humanitarian interventions, while strengthening government capacity to manage these movements. While it is anticipated that traditional transit countries (like Panama) will continue to receive population flows moving northward, new countries – such as Guyana and Suriname – are foreseen to emerge as transit territories with new mixed movements routes contouring, given the ongoing national crises in the subregion, such as Cuba and Venezuela.

### Regional Coordination

To build regional cooperation in response to displacement and to enhance responsibility-sharing in the region, UNHCR supports the

Comprehensive Regional Framework for Protection and Solutions (known by its Spanish acronym, **MIRPS**), an innovative



framework that brings together countries of origin, transit, and destination. The MIRPS is a pioneering initiative in the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and a concrete contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). As part of this framework, each country has committed to boost prevention, protection, and solutions for people of concern. UNHCR is also coordinating the response with partners, including national authorities, NGOs, and civil society organisations.

Furthermore, UNHCR co-leads with IOM the Regional Interagency Coordination

Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V), which seeks to improve Partners' coordination of operations in the region and promote evidence-based advocacy to meet the needs of refugees and migrants in Venezuela. R4V partner implementation is developed under the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP), which for 2022 considers the complex and dynamic situations affecting refugees and migrants from Venezuela, as well as their host countries, and represents the strong commitment of 192 R4V partners to work jointly and through a coordinated sectoral structure on these complex challenges.

Country/Territory of Origin	
Panama Multi-Country Office   2022	Population
Colombia	1,710
Cuba	6,200
Nicaragua	9,940
El Salvador	1,819
Various	14,900
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	234,405
Other	1,314
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>270,288</b>

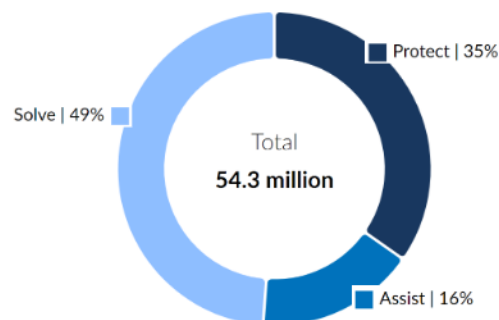
Country of Asylum	
Panama Multi-Country Office   2022	Population
Aruba	19,000
Belize	6,073
Cuba	278
Curaçao	19,394
Guyana	29,170
Nicaragua	1,158
Panama	153,524
Suriname	3,376
Trinidad and Tobago	38,315
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>270,288</b>

In this complex context of prolonged crises and post-pandemic challenges, UNHCR will continue to

- **provide lifesaving assistance** to vulnerable people of concern, including those who have been severely affected by COVID-19 and the consequent loss of livelihoods, income, and access to basic needs.
- **promote regional and national synergies and build alliances** with different stakeholders to ensure access to protection, rights, and basic needs and services for people who have been forced to flee.
- **advocate for safe, regular, and orderly human mobility pathways** to reduce the risk of loss of life, GBV, and other human rights abuses.

## Planned Response and Strategic Priorities: What does UNHCR do?

The number of people of concern to UNHCR continues to grow and the economic aftershocks of COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation of those in the most vulnerable situations. With sufficient funding and support, UNHCR will be able to address the strategic priorities for 2022, as identified through participatory assessments, protection and programme monitoring, and partner reporting:



1. **Respond to humanitarian needs** through multipurpose cash assistance, as well as community and area-based protection programming.
2. **Continue to provide legal assistance** to persons of concern, implement strategic litigation in targeted countries, and pursue prevention strategies that include situation monitoring and advocacy through alliances, to enhance the protection space and promote access to solutions.
3. **Enhance** the implementation of a **community-based protection** approach to ensure identification and referral of vulnerable cases, outreach, communicating with communities, and community-based interventions that benefit both displaced persons and host communities.
4. Continue to **raise awareness** on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues and **provide mental and psychosocial support** to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).
5. Continue to **advocate for inclusion** of refugees and asylum-seekers in governmental social protection networks and post COVID-19 socioeconomic recovery programmes.
6. Continue to **promote peaceful coexistence** between displaced people and host communities through social cohesion and strategic anti-xenophobia campaigns and activities.
7. **Strengthen access to education and training** opportunities for persons of concern.
8. Continue to **secure durable solutions** for persons of concern, including local integration and resettlement.
9. **Increase border monitoring** and community-based interventions in border areas, and **enhance capacity of border authorities**, including police and migration officials, for the timely identification and referral of persons with international protection needs within mixed movements.
10. **Carry out joint programmes and humanitarian interventions** with other UN agencies and civil society partners, including through human mobility working groups co-led by UNHCR and IOM (complementing government response).

## Required Support: Who supports UNHCR's response?

*"Our entire strategic approach is based on our responsibility to fulfil our mandate. UNHCR aims to save and improve the lives of the people of concern, lessen the burden on States that do so much to host them, and solve their situations as soon as possible. All this work is made possible by you – by host communities and countries, by donors – to whom the world owes a great debt of gratitude."*

– Filippo Grandi, UNHCR High Commissioner



Dozens of Venezuelan refugee and migrant Warao families have found a new home along the banks of the river leading to Port Kaituma, in Guyana. These are several generations of indigenous people who fled their home due to widespread shortages of basic items and insecurity in Venezuela. Over 60 of them are children and adolescents who have yet to access formal schooling.

### **Protect: Attaining favourable protection environments**

(Funding requirements: 18.9 million USD)

The quality of the fundamental right to asylum depends on a favourable protection environment. Without access to territory and to asylum procedures – including registration, refugee status determination, and documentation – there is no protection space. Over the past year, UNHCR was concerned about the increased risk of expulsions or returns to situations where refugees' lives and freedom are at risk (refoulement), with reported pushbacks at borders and interceptions at sea and without access to protection procedures. These challenges to access international protection are expected to persist through 2022.

UNHCR will continue to monitor whether governments prevent refugees from entering a safe country and try to ensure people are not pushed back into danger, as well as work closely with States to raise awareness on how to comply with their international obligations to protect displaced people and establish fair and efficient national asylum systems.

#### **The Story**

Government initiative delivers key documents for refugees in remote areas of Panama. With valid documentation, refugees like Elicia, mother of three Panamanian children, will be able to request financial support to pay for school expenses such as uniforms, supplies, and transportation.

Get to know more [here](#).

(UNHCR Operational Update, December 2021, p. 4)

#### **You can help UNHCR Protect:**

- **\$4** could cover the cost of **birth registration** for one baby in **Belize**, lowering the risk of statelessness.
- **\$50** could cover the costs of issuance and renewal of **refugee documentation** for one person in **Panama**, lowering the risk of detention.
- **\$1,136** could provide **legal representation** in one court proceeding in **Curaçao**, lowering the risk of deportation.





Without the documents, Elicia – a recognized refugee since 2007 – cannot receive the Beca Universal, a subsidy from the Panamanian government so that the families of children enrolled in public schools can cover school expenses such as uniforms, supplies and transportation. Photo credit: UNHCR/Diana Diaz

### Assist: Realizing rights in safe environments

(Funding requirements: 8.9 million USD)

Providing people of concern with safe environments for them to realize their rights means building solid foundations during emergency responses and ensuring that protection helps strengthen resilience in a sustainable manner. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated major impacts on food security, socioeconomic status, psychosocial well-being, living conditions, education, and access to specialized medical care.

UNHCR takes a holistic approach to basic and essential services, recognizing that housing/shelter, water and sanitation, energy, protection, health, education, and livelihoods are all crucial elements that allow people to exercise their rights in a safe environment. In 2022, UNHCR will strive to support governments in strengthening these services to be able to meet the needs of both host communities and refugees.

#### The Story

Meet Salù pa Tur, a UNHCR partner in Curaçao and the only clinic providing much needed primary healthcare, free of charge, to refugees and migrants in an irregular status on the island.

Get to know more [here](#).

(UNHCR Operational Update, November 2021, p. 4)

#### You can help UNHCR Assist:

- **\$137** could provide **food vouchers** for two months for a single person household in **Aruba**.
- **\$300** could cover **rent and utilities** for one month for a single person household in **Aruba** and **Curaçao**.
- **\$109** could provide **medical consultations and medicines** for one month in a shelter with capacity for seven GBV survivors in **Curaçao**.
- **\$125** could support a family of four with **basic housing needs** for one month in **Belize**.
- **\$20** could support a family of four with **drinking water** for one month in **Belize**.
- **\$240** could support a family of four to meet their **food needs** for one month in **Cuba**.
- **\$600** could support a family of four with one-month **rent** in **Cuba**.
- **\$750** could cover one-month **essential needs (food and rent)** for a family of four in **Guyana**.

- **\$10** could cover the cost of one **hygiene kit** in **Guyana**.
- **\$307** could cover one-month **food needs** for a family of four in **Panama**.
- **\$740** could cover one-month **essential needs** for a family of four in **Trinidad and Tobago**.
- **\$177** could cover the costs of a **medical procedure or specialized test** for a person suffering from a chronic or life-threatening medical condition in **Trinidad and Tobago**.

### Solve: Securing solutions

(Funding requirements: 26.5 million USD)

UNHCR works alongside refugees and host communities to find solutions to forced displacement, in cooperation with host States as primary duty bearers. To identify sustainable solutions to complex, large-scale, and ongoing forced displacement situations, UNHCR takes a progressive and comprehensive approach focusing on greater enjoyment of rights.

In 2022, UNHCR will continue to work with States and development partners on progressive solutions from the outset of the displacement with a shift towards greater inclusion and self-reliance. Inclusion contributes to the refugees' self-reliance and resilience of refugees and asylum-seekers, empowers them to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable, and dignified manner, avoids aid dependency and negative coping mechanisms, contributes to local economies, and prepares refugees for their futures – whether they return home, integrate into the country of asylum, or resettle elsewhere, as sometimes the only way to adequately keep refugees safe is to move them to a secure third country. Resettlement protects refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health, or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge. The Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative (**CRISP**) will support States, including emerging countries and other stakeholders, establish or expand resettlement programmes and advance complementary pathways through focused capacity-building.

#### The Story

*English lessons help refugees and migrants make a new life in Guyana. For Spanish-speaking Venezuelan children, like Dariannys, the language barrier sometimes keeps them out of the classroom in English-speaking Guyana. Weekly language classes help hundreds remove that obstacle.*

Get to know more [here](#).  
(UNHCR Operational Update, September 2021, p. 4)

### You can help UNHCR Solve:

- **\$236** could assist one child with **Back-to-School cash** for a year in **Aruba** and **Curaçao**.
- **\$225** could cover **primary school costs** (annual fee, books, 3 sets of uniforms and 1 pair of shoes) for a child in primary school in **Belize**.
- **\$750** could provide **seed capital** for a micro enterprise in **Belize**.
- **\$50** could cover the cost of **school supplies** for one year for a child in primary school in **Panama**.
- **\$300** could cover costs of livelihoods-related **legal procedures** (work permit, renewal of documents, good health certification, medical exams, etc.) for one person in **Panama**.
- **\$40** could provide **connectivity** for a month for work or vocational training in **Panama**.