

CONTEXT

7 JULY
2022

In Panamá, **union and social organizations called indefinite protests** due to demands regarding price increases, unemployment and corruption. As a result, **there have been roadblocks**, which have generated shortages of goods and fuel. These roadblocks include the Pan-American Highway, a route for mixed transcontinental movements coming from the Darien region, bordering Urabá region in Colombia.

11 JULY
2022

The Panamanian government summoned the protest leaders to a working group which, at the cutoff date of this report, has not reached an agreement to lift the protests.

15 JULY
2022

According to a joint report by the Human Mobility Group of the United Nations System in Panama and humanitarian actors with local presence, several points of the Inter-American Highway in the south of the country are closed (with partial and gradual openings at night). At the refugee and migrant assistance points on Panama's southern border, **some 4,000 people are stuck**, basic services are being provided, but there are still gaps in WASH and shelter; besides, security conditions prevent the opening of humanitarian corridors.

18 JULY
2022

The **Urabá local GIFMM** identifies a significant risk of collapse of services in Panama for refugees and migrants in transit as well as a risk of a 'bottleneck' in **Necoclí** municipality, in case that the situation in Panama continues and leads to the closure of sea transit. Additionally, there is a growing trend in weekly flows during the month of July, whose average **increased by 78% compared to June**. Given that the daily average of departures from the official dock in Necoclí was **≈440 people** between July 9 and 15, and that in June approximately half of the persons in transit did not depart from the dock, according to official figures from the Panamanian government, it is estimated that **potentially between 800 and 900 people per day could be in a 'bottleneck' in Necoclí**, other localities in Urabá and even other areas of the country.

≈800 to 900 daily refugees and migrants at risk of a 'bottleneck' at Necoclí municipality, particularly in the surroundings of the dock



Credit: Information and Orientation (PAO) team, Necoclí / UNHCR

GAPS IDENTIFIED

Even as **Necoclí municipality has a Contingency Plan** related to mixed movements, such as a possible damming, **there is still a lack of resources and institutional response capacity**. In addition, there is no adequate place to prioritize cases of special vulnerability. These have been **priority advocacy and support actions** developed by GIFMM Urabá together with local authorities.

COORDINATION

Urabá local GIFMM activated the following preparatory actions:

- **Daily monitoring of movements to Necoclí**, in coordination with humanitarian partners in Panama and with other local GIFMMs, to identify increases in flows and to consider information actions about the contingency targeted to the refugees and migrants.
- Filling out of a **sectoral matrix of partners' capacities**.
- **Identification of key actions** in case that this risk becomes an actual event (e.g. use of joint initial needs assessment tools).

Local **GIFMM Urabá** partners continue **monitoring the situation in order to complement the institutional response to a possible 'bottleneck'**, as required by local authorities, in context of the Migration Management Table, led by the Government Secretariat of Necoclí.

In close cooperation with the **national and local GIFMMs**, **key messages about the situation in Panama are being delivered** along the route from the border with Ecuador to the border with Panama.

POTENTIAL SECTORAL IMPACTS

Necoclí is a municipality of **≈13,700** inhabitants in the urban area (National Statistics Department, 2022); consequently, the significant arrival of people in transit would imply an **overdemand for goods and services**:

- Currently (without a 'bottleneck'), between **80 and 100 people stay overnight on beaches in Necoclí**. There they ask for money to cover their travel expenses and basic needs, such as **food**. They stay, on average, between two and four weeks. **The situation on the beach could deteriorate in the event of a damming**, and pregnant women, children and people with disabilities would be the most affected populations. In addition, the circulation of dollars in the municipality affects the local economy and **limits access to food for some refugees, migrants and host population**.
- In terms of **water, sanitation and hygiene**, the municipality already has **water shortages** due to problems with the water treatment plant. Host population shares water supply via tanks with the population sleeping at the beach, which limits access to safe water for all.
- Primary **health** care capacity **could also collapse** previous crowds caused a **shortage of medicines** at the Necoclí Hospital, which, combined with insufficient medical equipment, has led to a shortage of medicines. This, together with **insufficient medical equipment**, led to difficulties in providing health care to people in transit.
- Regarding **protection**, the closure of transit through the dock (regular routes) would encourage **overcharged, increased transit through unregulated maritime routes**, which would favor fraud, human trafficking and smuggling, gender-based violence, separation of family groups, and the return of people in need of international protection and statelessness (in the event of births during transit).