

**FACTSHEET**

**MIXED MOVEMENTS IN TRANSIT THROUGH URABÁ REGION (COLOMBIA-PANAMA BORDER)**

*This document covers the period January - July 2022.*

*This report was prepared by the national GIFMM team, with support and inputs from local partners and counterparts provided by the GIFMM Urabá coordination team.*

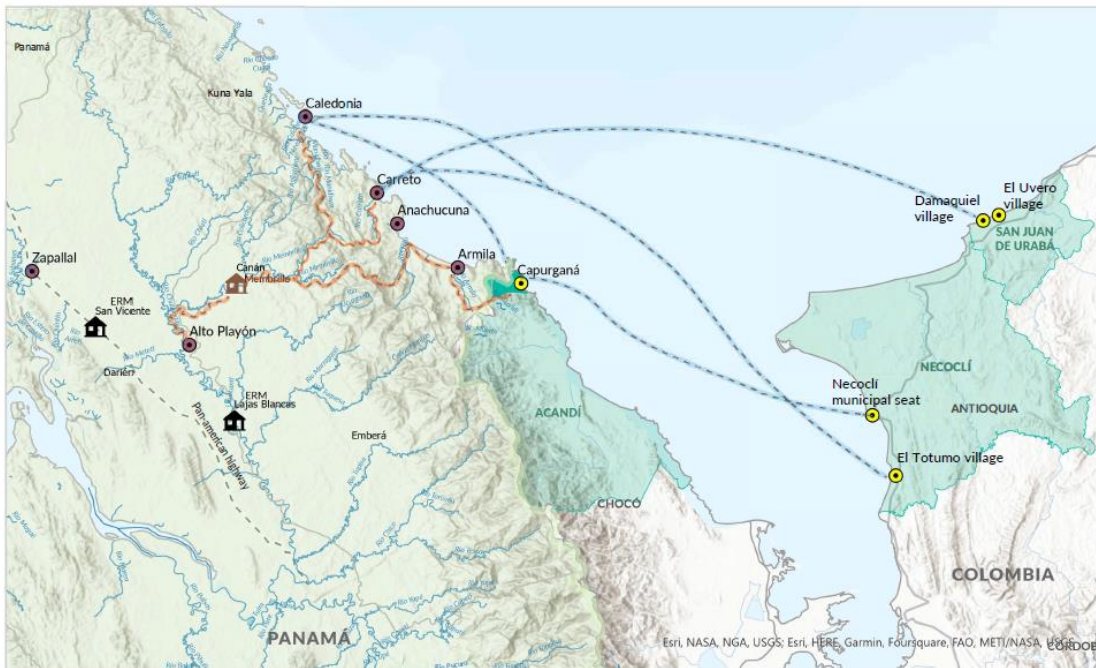
**KEY FIGURES**

Source: Migración Panamá

**71.012**

FOREIGNERS IN IRREGULAR TRANSIT THROUGH THE PANAMA-COLOMBIA BORDER (JAN - JUL 2022)

**63%** VENEZUELAN NATIONALS  
**37%** OF OTHER NATIONALITIES



**CONVENTIONS**

- Departaments
- Municipalities
- Departure spots
- Arrival spots
- Migratory Reception Station (ERM in Spanish)
- Host community
- Land routes
- Sea routes
- Main rivers
- Primary roads

**OVERVIEW**

- In 2022, there is evidence of an increase in mixed movements of Venezuelan nationals and persons of other nationalities (mainly from Haiti, Cuba, and several African countries) to Central and North America.
- Although these movements are a regional dynamic, they are particularly evident in the **Urabá region** (departments of Antioquia and Chocó in Colombia) where the crossing of the Darién Gap represents multiple challenges for people in transit, even putting their lives at risk, as some deaths have been reported in this stretch of the route.
- The nature of this route, characterized by dangerous stretches of sea and jungle **exposes refugees and migrants to multiple risks**, such as rights violations, exploitation, and abuse. Particular risks are identified for women and children and adolescents (especially UASC).
- In **Necoclí**, the main port of Urabá region, there is **limited capacity to receive and assist refugees and migrants**: the supply of basic goods and services is saturated and further complicated by the tourist nature of the area.
- Many refugees and migrants transiting this part of the transcontinental route are not aware of its particular risks and challenges. Social media does not provide sufficient information.
- Given the magnitude and urgency of the situation, the Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows (**GIFMM**) created the **local GIFMM Urabá** and specifically the **Working Group on Mixed Movements** to accompany and complement the work of local authorities to address the situation; however, significant sectoral gaps have been identified.

## FEATURES OF THE TRANSIT

- According to official figures from the Panamanian Government, in the first semester of 2022, particularly in May and June, there has been a **sustained increase in the number of persons in mixed movements** across land borders, from **>4,400** in January to **>22,500** in June.
- **Venezuelan population has also increased both in number and proportion**: from **1,153** Venezuelans in January (**26%** of the total in transit) to **16,864** in July (**75%** of the total), this is almost 15 times more than at the start of the year.
- Regarding **other nationalities in transit**, most are from **Haiti, Cuba, Ecuador, Senegal** and **India**, which account for **19%** of the total number of persons in transit identified by Panamanian authorities.
- Due to the characteristics of this route, **all arrivals to Panama from Urabá are irregular in nature, and official figures do not capture the total numbers**. In the absence of an (official) Migration Control Point in **Necoclí**, figures on **departures** through the municipal dock are provided by local transportation companies and are **unofficial and incomplete** (e.g., underreporting of children under two years old, whose ticket is not charged). In addition, since May, departures of **speedboats not run by these companies** are not currently recorded.
- In addition to the Necoclí dock, there are **additional irregular exit points**. **Departure from there are impossible to monitor and their destinations vary**.

## MAIN PROTECTION RISKS

- In July, the **local figures** of departures from Colombia through **Necoclí** municipality **only represent 42.5%** of those registered by the Panamanian authorities as “irregular entries from Colombia”. There is also evidence of a **greater use of sea routes between Colombia and Panama**, in order to reduce the total duration of the trip and avoid having to traverse the Darien jungle.
  - However, these **new routes do not diminish the risks, but rather change them and make less visible** the related risks.
  - **Thus, refugees and migrants in transit are exposed to physical risks** due to the use of unofficial and possibly less safe boats. **The lack of official controls increases the risk** of overcrowding on the boats and the limited or non-existent use of vests and other safety elements. This entails a **higher risk of shipwrecking**.
  - **Disappearances of refugees and migrants in sea transit** for several days have been reported on social networks. IOM’s *Missing Migrants* project has records of **at least 83 incidents of disappearances and deaths of persons in transit through the Darien gap** since 2014, from which **34 (41%) correspond to 2021 and 2022**.
- Partners of the local GIFMM Urabá have identified other **protection risks** during transit on this specific section of the route (exit to Panama):
- Regarding **child protection**, the **risks of labor and sexual exploitation** (including by armed actors), extortion, abuse and intimidation are of concern. These risks are associated with **situations of family separation** and are less visible due to local gaps that prevent the identification and activation of the **assistance pathways for UASC**: While Panama reports **>170 unaccompanied and separated children and adolescents**, Colombia has only two cases identified. In addition, given the current Colombian legal framework, **risk of statelessness are also identified**, particularly for children born in Colombia from nationalities different to Venezuelan.
  - Respecting to **sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, although there are no figures for incidents in Colombia, **Médecins sans Frontières registers 100 SV survivors assisted in the Darien region from January to May 2022** and highlights the difficulties of **timely prophylactic and psychosocial assistance for such violence** (<72 hours post-aggression) given the challenging transit conditions.
  - The predominance of **irregular routes** also represents a **growing risk of trafficking and smuggling** by organized crime networks, particularly for **youth/adults of productive age**.

## NEEDS IDENTIFIED

The baseline conditions of Necoclí, a municipality of **≈13,700 inhabitants** in the urban area (according to DANE 2022 projections) present **limitations in the supply of and access to public goods and services**. Thus, the constant influx of refugees and migrants in transit implies an **over-demand for such goods and services** that affects both the transit population and host communities.

- Regarding **livelihoods**, **74%** of the Venezuelan travel groups interviewed in Necoclí stated that they **did not have enough money to continue their route** (vs. **62%** for other nationalities).
- Due to the lack of dignified **shelter** solutions, both for lack of money to pay for them and because of the **limited housing availability in the municipality**, between **80 and 100 people**, mainly Venezuelans, stay and spend the night on the beaches of **Necoclí**, where they ask for money to meet basic needs such as **food** and travel expenses. They stay between two and four weeks on average, exposing themselves to multiple risks.
- In terms of **water, sanitation and hygiene**, due to restrictions of the water treatment plant, the **local supply capacity is limited**; thus, the supply via tanks is **shared among refugees, migrants and host population but is insufficient**. There are

also **limited conditions of hygiene and basic sanitation**.

- **56%** of Venezuelan travel groups interviewed in Necoclí reported **not having access to food** (vs. **35%** of other nationalities); this implies having to resort to negative coping mechanisms (e.g. depending on begging or expose themselves to protection risks) to access food.
- The [Health Situation Report published by PAHO](#) identifies medical urgencies, chronic diseases, pregnant women without prenatal checkups, acute respiratory diseases and infections in children, and psychiatric patients, among other issues. **47%** of the travel groups interviewed in Necoclí reported **not having access to health services** (**56%** of groups of other nationalities and **45%** of Venezuelans).
- **Access to information** for refugees and migrants in transit along the Colombian territory and particularly through Urabá region **needs to be strengthened**, since social media sources (Facebook, TikTok) do not **show the complex conditions and risks** of transit. Also, refugees and migrants who do not speak Spanish **have language related barriers**, hindering their access to key information.

## MAIN GAPS

- Regarding **information** on this situation, the route conditions, transit and dynamics on the beach do not allow for **quantitative monitoring and periodic updates on needs**. Challenges are also found in **identifying and tracking the total dimension of the movements** due to the multiple routes in this section.

- At the **institutional level**, although Necoclí has a **Contingency Plan** to address scenarios related to mixed movements, such as a possible bottle-neck, there is ~~still~~ a lack of resources and institutional response capacity in the event that such plan has to be activated.

*See more about the needs, gaps and capacities identified by the GIFMM in July in view of a scenario of potential bottleneck in Necoclí in the Alerts [N°1](#) and [N°2](#) and the [Capacities and gaps analysis](#).*

## COORDINATION PRIORITIES

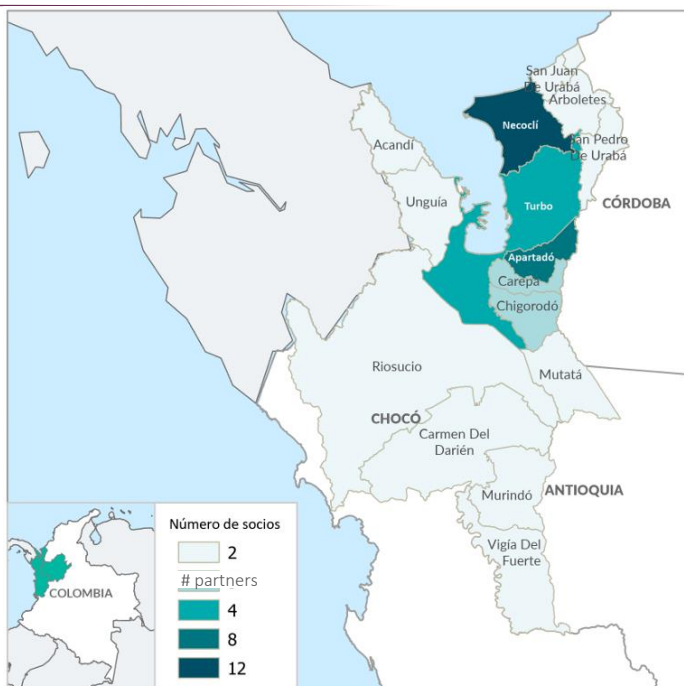
Given the magnitude and urgency of the dynamics in the Urabá region, the National GIFMM created the **local GIFMM Urabá** as an inter-agency coordination space in response to the different profiles of **refugees and migrants from Venezuela and of other nationalities**, based in **Apartadó**, the capital of the region.

Within the local GIFMM, the situation of mixed movements to Central and North America is covered by the **Working Group on Mixed Movements in Transit**, which meets from **Necoclí**.

The **Working Group on Mixed Movements in Urabá** has the following priority lines of action:

- Monitoring, **joint analysis** and exchange of information on the **context of the movements** and the humanitarian situation along this stretch of the route.
- Identification and management of **needs and risks** along the route, including **intersectoral assistance**, communication and advocacy strategies.
- **Supporting the local authorities** (with a focus on **capacity building**) in the design and follow-up of the institutional response, particularly on actions coordinated through the local **Migration Management Board**, led by the **Necoclí Government Secretariat**.

## OPERATIONAL PRESENCE



\*Arboletes, Apartadó, Carepa, Chigorodó, Mutatá, Murindó, Necoclí, San Juan de Urabá, San Pedro de Urabá, Turbo, Vigía del Fuerte, Acandí, Carmen del Darién, Riosucio, Unguía.

14 partners of GIFMM Urabá are present in one or more of the following 15 municipalities\* of the region:

APOYAR | Caritas Germany | Colombian Red Cross – Antioquia | HIAS | IOM | Mercy Corps | PAHO | Pastoral Social Diócesis de Apartadó | Profamilia | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WFP | World Vision.

This presence *does not necessarily imply current actions in response to mixed movements to Central and North America*; In this regard, it is necessary to identify the response specifically oriented to the Venezuelan population in transit registered by the GIFMM partners in the **5W/Activity Info** monitoring system. With respect to mixed movements of other nationalities, the response is registered by humanitarian partners in the **345W** system, administered by OCHA for the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) under the populations "Extracontinental migrants affected by public health risk, natural disasters and armed conflict" and "Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela".

## RESPONSE

Between January and July 2022, a total of **94 activities** to assist Venezuelan population in transit were reported, of which **64** took place in Necoclí municipality, **9** in Apartadó, **9** in Carepa, **9** in Chigorodó and **3** in Turbo, for a total of **26,094 assistances**. Actions were focused on **Protection (General)**, with **37%** of the assistance, where main actions include in-person and telephone assistance on assistance pathways, access to rights, legal assistance and psychosocial assistance; **Health (33%)**, mainly through primary health care consultations and delivery of supplies; **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**, with **14%**, focused on the delivery of water purification tablets; **Multisector (7%)** through the delivery of basic household items (*baby carriers* and kits); **Human Trafficking and Smuggling (4%)** through assistance and protection for victims or persons at risk of trafficking; **Child Protection (3%)** through training to caregivers and **Food Security (1%)** through the delivery of food kits.

## RESPONSE

**Table 1. Response to Venezuelan population in transit in the Urabá region.** Source: 5w Matrix. January-July 2022

Note: Reference corresponds to 'assistance' instead of 'beneficiaries' since the figure currently reported does not yet include the calculation according to sectoral criteria to mitigate duplication of beneficiaries.

Municipality (Department)	Organization	Sector	# activities	# assistances
Apartadó (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	1,515
		Protection (General)	5	
Carepa (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	568
		Protection (General)	5	
Chigorodó (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	473
		Protection (General)	5	
Necoclí (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	369
		Protection (General)	5	
	UNHCR	WASH	7	16,450
		Protection (General)	6	2,330
	HIAS	Multisector	7	976
		Trata y Tráfico	4	275
	IOM	Protection (General)	6	147
		Salud	11	1,009
	Colombian Red Cross	Salud	4	672
		WASH	6	972
World Vision	World Vision	Child Protection	3	206
		Food security	1	118
		Protection (General)	3	14
Turbo (Antioquia)	UNHCR	Protection (General)	3	14

Between January and July 2022, a total of **75 activities** to assist Venezuelan population in transit were reported, of which **48** took place in Necoclí municipality, **9** in Apartadó, **9** in Carepa and **9** in Chigorodó, with a total of **3.793 assistances**. Actions were focused on **Health (45%)**, mainly through primary health care consultations and delivery of supplies; **Protection (General) with 29%** through protection assistance and specialized services; **WASH (11%)**, through the supply of hygiene services and the supply of water purification tablets; **Multisector (11%)**, through the delivery of basic household items (*baby carriers* and kits); and **Human Trafficking and Smuggling (4%)**, with training in prevention, identification, assistance and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as assistance and protection services for victims or persons at risk of trafficking.

**Table 2. Response to population of nationalities other than Venezuelan in transit in the Urabá region.**

Source: Matrix of own elaboration / ad-hoc. January-July 2022.

Note: Reference corresponds to 'assistance' instead of 'beneficiaries' since the figure currently reported does not yet include the calculation according to sectoral criteria to mitigate duplication of beneficiaries.

Municipality (Department)	Organization	Sector	# activities	# assistances	
Apartadó (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	3	
		Protection (General)	5		
Carepa (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	3	
		Protection (General)	5		
Chigorodó (Antioquia)	Mercy Corps	Health	4	3	
		Protection (General)	5		
Necoclí (Antioquia)	UNHCR	WASH	8	2,043	
		Multisector	8	171	
	HIAS	Protection (General)	2	4	
		Trata y Tráfico	3	9	
	Mercy Corps	Health	4	9	
		Protection (General)	5		
	IOM	IOM	Health	10	582
			Health	8	975
Colombian Red Cross	Colombian Red Cross	Health	8	975	
		Health	8	975	