END-YEAR REPORT 2023



CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO



* Assistance under the RMRP was provided to refugees and migrants in-transit in all countries in the subregion.

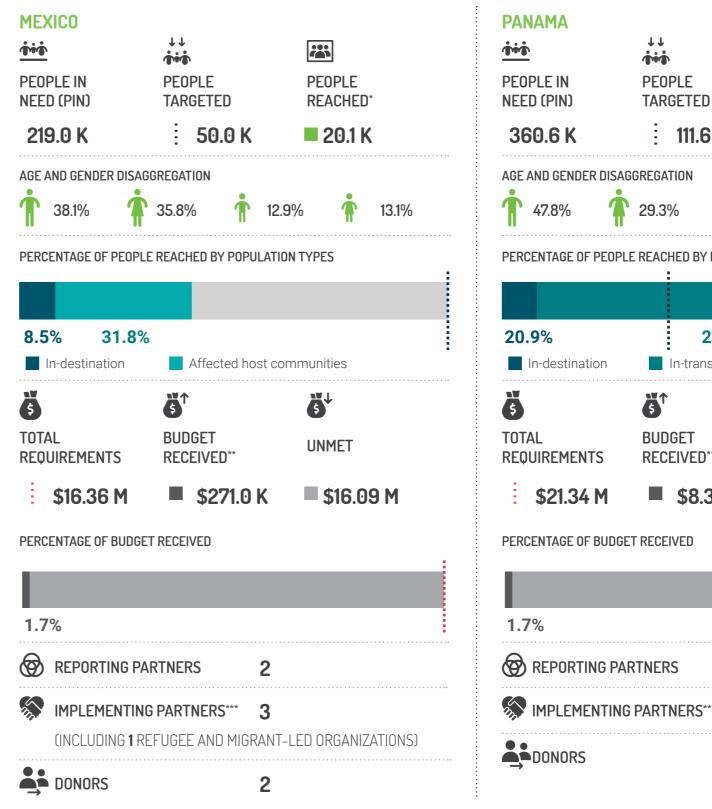
Given that these populations by their very nature pass through multiple countries, they may be assisted

in more than one country. This would mean that the subregional total for in-transit people reached with

in-destination population (as is also done for the corresponding PiNs and targets).

assistance would include significant duplications. In order to avoid such duplications, information for the

in-transit population assisted is included at the country levels and should be referred to distinctly from the

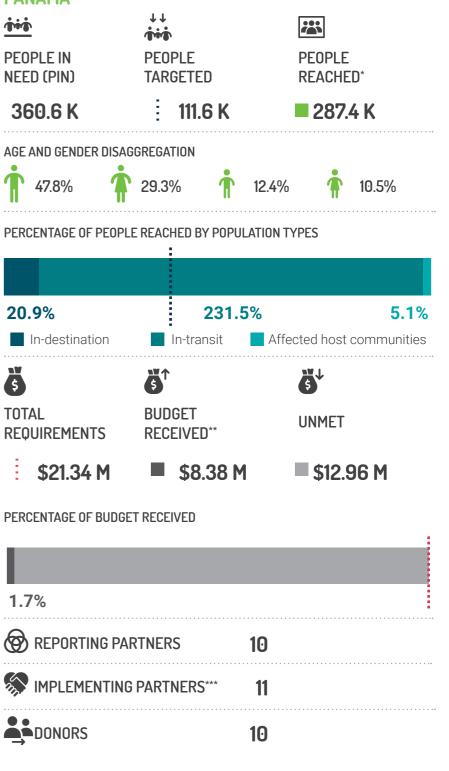


** Funding information as reported to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) as of 1 April 2024. This data is based on partners' voluntary reporting of contributions and may not accurately represent all funds attributed to the RMRP response. Unearmarked funds from donors may also not be reported to FTS with a sector or country designation at the time of receipt by RMRP partners.

Funds reported for activities implemented under common services or reported for various activities falling under multiple sectors (not disaggregated) are not reflected in the above infographic. For more information about the funding of the RMRP please refer to this <u>link</u>.



Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela



*** This includes RMRP appealing partners that are also implementing activities, as well as implementing partners that are not appealing partners. For this reason, it is recommended to quote partner figures separately and not sum the number of partners, as this would double-count implementing partners that are also reporting activities.



		□ ↓↓ †it	*	%	□ 5**	•	%	
=	EDUCATION	10.3 K	8.5 K	82.9%	\$1.51 M	\$0.0	0.0%	
***	FOOD SECURITY	15.3 K	25.3 K	165.6%	\$1.75 M	\$350.4 K	20.1%	
ţ	HEALTH	37.3 K	49.0 K	131.4%	\$4.39 M	\$474.2 K	10.8%	
	HUMANITARIAN TRANSPORTATION	15.3 K	76	0.5%	\$945.1 K	\$0.0	0.0%	
٩	INTEGRATION	8.2 K	719	8.8%	\$7.57 M	\$739.4 K	9.8%	
•	NUTRITION	5.3 K	1.4 K	25.6%	\$275.0 K	\$0.0	0.0%	
4	PROTECTION	57.2 K	61.7 K	107.9%	\$8.73 M	\$486.2 K	5.6%	
V	CHILD PROTECTION	22.3 K	81.9 K	367.2%	\$2.61 M	\$3.44 M	131.8%	
Ĩ	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)	34.7 K	52.0 K	150.1%	\$2.74 M	\$135.2 K	4.9%	
¥	HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING	1.5 K	0	0.0%	\$283.0 K	\$20.8 K	7.4%	
Î	SHELTER	34.6 K	38.1 K	110.2%	\$6.73 M	\$1.38 M	20.4%	
ب	WASH	102.1 K	264.4 K	259.0%	\$3.32 M	\$26.7 K	0.8%	
• • •	MULTIPURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE (MPC)	11.0 K	1.1 K	9.9%	\$3.66 M	\$0.0	0.0%	

Situation

Throughout 2023, the situation of refugees and migrants in the Central America and Mexico sub-region was largely characterized by unprecedented onward and transit movements, predominantly in a northward direction. In 2023, *520,085 refugees and migrants crossed Darien jungle* between Colombia and Panama, including *113,180 children* – more than double the number of crossings in 2022. Sixty-three per cent of this population were from Venezuela, followed by Ecuador (11%), Haiti (9%), China (5%), and Colombia

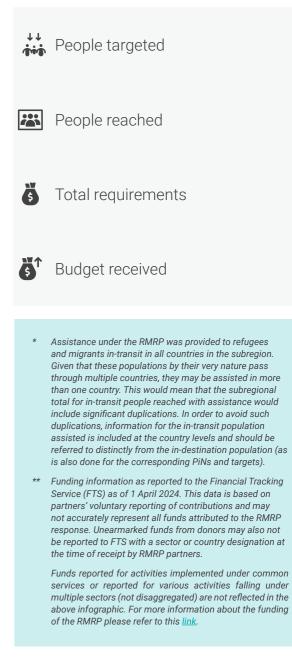
(4%). The end of a COVID-19-era entry restriction to enter the U.S. (known as Title 42) in May 2023, was followed by an initial decrease in irregular movements northbound for a few months, largely due to uncertainties around the potential impacts of this policy change, including stricter immigration enforcement measures. However, these movements subsequently increased, with the month of August accounting for an unprecedented record of 81,946 crossings. At the U.S. Southwest border with Mexico, <u>360,584</u> encounters of Venezuelans irregularly crossing were registered in 2023. <u>Hundreds of cases of sexual violence</u> were recorded in

Darien, evidencing the additional vulnerabilities mainly faced by refugee and migrant women. Moreover, Panamanian authorities registered fifteen children born while in-transit in the Darien.

In response to these unparalleled irregular movements, in September 2023, the government of Panama announced <u>new</u> <u>enforcement measures</u> and the government of Costa Rica <u>declared</u> <u>a state of emergency</u>. In October 2023, these governments also agreed to allow private bus companies to transport refugees and migrants from temporary reception stations in the Darien (Panama) directly to the migration station in Paso Canoas (Costa Rica).



Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela



Conversely, following the <u>Palenque Declaration of the Regional</u> <u>Migration Summit</u> with Latin American regional leaders in October 2023, the governments of Mexico and Venezuela announced that they would restart <u>repatriation flights to Venezuela</u>. Along the northern border with the U.S., an increase in kidnappings and extorsions by organized criminal groups was reported due to an ongoing conflict between factions of non-state actors.

To support the integration of Venezuelans in-destination, the governments of Costa Rica and Panama launched temporary permits for those in an irregular situation, which facilitate access to formal employment and services such as healthcare and education that were previously difficult to access. In Costa Rica, 6,268 applications were approved in 2023, including for 2,546 Venezuelans. In Panama, over 8,000 temporary permits were approved. However, only a smaller number of Venezuelans were able to access this permit, likely in part due to high application fees amounting to approximately USD 1,000 per person. While these measures facilitate access to temporary regular status, employment, and services for some Venezuelans, those who arrived more recently - and new arrivals - will not have access to these permits. In Mexico, 63,200 Venezuelans held a permanent residency in 2023 (42.0 K in 2022), while 11.4 K held a temporary residency (16.2 K in 2022). In addition, 431 new applications for naturalization were filed by Venezuelans and 1.8 K pending cases were approved. These developments demonstrate progress in the integration process of Venezuelans in Mexico.

A decrease in new asylum applications by Venezuelans was observed when compared to 2022. In Mexico, the number of asylum applications dropped by 63%, following decisions in October 2023 by the Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) to suspend the issuance of asylum registration appointment slips and by the National Migration Institute (INM) to suspend Humanitarian Visitors' Cards (TVRH), both to avoid their use by those intending to transit the country. In 2023, there were 5.5 K *asylum applications* by Venezuelans (14.8 K in 2022), with an 82% approval rate (90% in 2022), bringing to 24.3 K the number of *recognized Venezuelan refugees in Mexico* since 2013. In Costa Rica, there were 1.8 K *asylum applications by Venezuelans* (5.8 K in 2022) and 293 approved applications, now totalling 23 K recognized Venezuelan

refugees. In Panama, 21 asylum applications were submitted by Venezuelans (114 in 2022), while 23 were recognized as refugees, bringing to 71 the *number of recognized Venezuelan refugees*.

Response

To respond to unprecedented needs in 2023, R4V partners worked with all levels of governments to provide assistance to 300.8K refugees, migrants, and host community members in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico, including 258.4K in-transit refugees and migrants (in the case of Mexico, the response was limited to Venezuelans), representing 227% of the target population. The number of people reached exceeded the targets mainly in Child Protection (by 367%), WASH (by 259%), Food Security (by 166%) and GBV (by 150%). This is attributable to the unexpected surge in onward and transit movements, requiring partners to adjust previously planned activities to respond to the emerging emergency situation.

Partners provided access to water and hygiene items to over 264.4K people in need; provided life-saving healthcare services such as medical consultations, access to MHPSS, medical insurance, and donation of medication to 49K vulnerable individuals; and child protection assistance to over 81.9K children, including through child safe spaces along in-transit routes, which also facilitated the provision of psychosocial and legal assistance, and the implementation of care measures for unaccompanied and/or separated children. Partners also provided specialized assistance and legal support to hundreds of survivors of genderbased violence (GBV) and victims of trafficking, particularly women, reaching 52K of people in need in the GBV Sub-sector. At the same time, partners worked with governments to inform refugees and migrants about the risks associated with irregular routes.

To support protection and integration of refugees and migrants in-destination in the sub-region, R4V partners assisted with their access regular status, including to temporary permits. In Mexico, this also included supporting the naturalization of 175 Venezuelans. Partners worked closely with governments to improve the asylum systems and process applications. In Panama, partners supported the government with the opening of a National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, by its acronym in Spanish) office in Meteti to receive asylum applications from people entering Panama.

Socio-economic integration activities in the sub-region benefitted 719 refugees and migrants through entrepreneurship and employment programs, access to community centres, and social cohesion activities such as campaigns and creative workshops for families to shape public spaces, for example with community murals.

In Mexico, partners supported 408 Venezuelans to access education, including through scholarships to facilitate their access to tertiary education and certifying studies completed outside of Mexico. In Costa Rica, early childhood learning and primary and secondary school supply kits were distributed, benefitting 3,520 refugees and migrants in-destination. Partners in Panama conducted education workshops focusing on soft and technical skills assisting 69 Venezuelans.

Lessons Learned

The needs of unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants transiting the sub-region far surpass response capacities of governments and partners across all sectors. Venezuelan refugeeand migrant-led organizations played a key role in identifying and reaching the most vulnerable populations and sharing the latest updates on challenges faced by refugees and migrants, allowing R4V partners to adapt to the context in this sub-region. Nevertheless, limited funding for RMRP activities remains a challenge affecting the capacity of governments and partners to respond, especially refugee- and migrant-led organizations.

In 2024, R4V partners will increase the visibility of needs and response activities to mobilize additional resources, and will work to support refugee and migrant-led organizations, including through capacity-building and fundraising. They will continue to advocate for access to regular status and asylum, including through the extension of temporary permits in Costa Rica and Panama, while also increasing awareness of the risks of irregular routes and providing humanitarian assistance. R4V Platforms in Costa Rica and Panama will participate in the first regional joint needs assessment primary quantitative data collection, which will improve data on Venezuelan refugees and migrants in these countries to allow for evidence-based planning and implementation of activities.

