



PEOPLE IN NEED

743.3K

PEOPLE REACHED WITH SOME  
FORM OF ASSISTANCE\*

66.9K



FUNDING SITUATION\*\*

1.1%

FUNDED: 0.65M

REQUIREMENT: USD 56.45M

## Situation

### Panama

- By the end of March, according to [official figures](#) from Panama's National Migration Service (SNM, by its acronym in Spanish), 110,008 people had crossed the Darien jungle from Colombia to Panama, including 70,092 Venezuelans, 8,953 Ecuadorians, 7,329 Haitians, 7,136 Colombians, and 6,358 Chinese. This is a 20% increase from the same period last year. The Ministry of Public Security of Panama [anticipates](#) the number of Darien crossings this year to exceed last year.
- On 14 February, a boat carrying 27 passengers, mostly Afghans, attempting to enter Panama irregularly [capsized near the Caribbean coast of Guna Yala](#). At least five deaths were recorded, including a boy. Authorities transferred the survivors to hospitals for medical attention. The Public Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation into the boat's captain for his responsibility in the tragedy. The Minister of Public Security mentioned that although Panama has strengthened its efforts to monitor irregular boat entries, these incidents continue to occur due to the dangerousness of that stretch of sea.
- The Office of the Ombudsperson announced the opening of an [ex-officio complaint](#) related to the increasing cases of refugee and migrant victims of sexual abuse in Darien and expressed its concern to the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudspersons regarding this matter. Panama and Colombia's Ombudspersons agreed to activate the Binational Early Alert, a measure focused on safeguarding the lives of refugees and migrants and collaborating with authorities to prevent these acts of violence.
- On 1 March 2024, a fire in several accommodation units caused severe damages to physical structures of the San Vicente Temporary Migratory Reception Station (ETRM) in Darien resulting in the closure of the accommodations. According to the [Public Ministry](#), there were 45 persons under investigation for the incident detained in a penitentiary centre for six months, impacting the ability of partners to assist these people. The remaining refugees and migrants who were in the San Vicente ETRM were transported to EMISUR in Costa Rica, including asylum-seekers and individuals who were in the process of assisted voluntary return.

### Costa Rica

- According to Costa Rica's Directorate General for Migration and Aliens (DGME), 110,740 people entered Costa Rica's Southern Migration Station (EMISUR, in Spanish), a 24% increase compared to the first quarter of 2023.
- Following the government's declaration of a state of emergency in September 2023, on 30 January, the United Nations System in Costa Rica launched a [preparedness and response plan for in-transit populations](#) in Costa Rica. The plan calls for an additional USD 9.71 million to support and complement the government's response efforts, particularly in the sectors of WASH, health, shelter, protection, food security, and nutrition.
- Despite an overall decrease of people in transit coming through the southern border of Costa Rica, partners registered an increase of people either stranded at the northern border or staying for longer (3-7 days or more). The numbers ranged from 30 to 120 sleeping in Los Chiles' streets (which caused complaints by host communities). Shelter capacity was overstretched, as well as food assistance and WASH services. Stay times were longer in case of health conditions, GBV, and lack of money to continue with their route. People who arrived in buses, often at night and without money, lacked information on the route, becoming more vulnerable to misguidance by smugglers. Most non-Venezuelans in transit are not aware of the USD 150 charge by Nicaraguan police once they cross the border (R4V partner observations).
- On 21 March, the country launched the San José Chapter of the Quito Process and chaired its first plenary session with member states and the Quito Process Group of Friends. The Government of Costa Rica presented

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\* From 01/01/2024 to 31/03/2024 | \*\*Source: FTS Website



the Pro Tempore Presidency (PTP)'s proposed work plan and strategic priorities, including safe routes and protection of persons in mixed movements/secondary movements; mechanisms for family reunification; strengthening of host communities, asylum systems, international protection; permanent stay regimes; migratory residencies; and temporary protection. The PTP also stressed the need to coordinate the Quito Process' work with other regional platforms such as MIRPS, the Regional Conference on Migration to prevent duplication and increase efficiency of these mechanisms; this point was endorsed by member states.

- The Refugee Unit office in Paso Canoas reopened on 15 January, providing access to asylum procedures for those in need of international protection at the southern border. Requirements for asylum-seekers to obtain work permits remain a challenge due to the restrictive requirements stated in decree MGP-43810.
- The registration period for the Special Temporary Category (CET) for Nicaraguans, Cubans, and Venezuelans, established in March 2023 through the Executive Decree 43809-MGP, expired in February 2024 with 8,100 persons approved (of a total of 10,000 applicants), including 3,026 Venezuelans, of which 6,600 finalized their process and have received their documentation. The requirement to register at respective consulates presented an important barrier for accessing the category. Additionally, the high cost of documentation (USD 95 per person) plus the mandatory enrolment in Costa Rica's Social Security Fund (CCSS) also made this process challenging to access by the most vulnerable refugee and migrant population.

## Mexico

- During the reporting period, [U.S. Customs and Borders Patrol \(CBP\)](#) recorded 555,475 encounters at the Southwest border with Mexico, including 36,858 Venezuelans (7%). This represents a 60% increase in encounters with Venezuelans compared to the same period last year. There was a [significant drop in the arrests of Venezuelans by CBP at the U.S.-Mexico border since last year](#). In December, 49,717 arrests of Venezuelans at the border were recorded, compared to 4,422 in January 2024 and 3,184 in February.
- The [Migratory Policy Unit](#) reported a total of 89,752 events of Venezuelans in an irregular situation in the first quarter.
- According to the [Mexican Refugee Commission](#) (COMAR), in the first three months of 2024, 23,753 asylum claims have been filed in Mexico, representing a 37% decrease from the same period last year. Of this amount, Venezuelans filed 1,314 claims, representing approximately six % of total claims. The location with the most Venezuelan asylum claims in the first three months of the year was Mexico City with 771 claims, followed by Chiapas with 260 claims, and Veracruz with 115 claims.
- According to R4V partners, since 1 March, asylum-seekers in Mexico must report to COMAR or INM delegations weekly to prove their presence in the state where they presented their claims. This obligation was paused during COVID-19 but has now resumed. Failure to comply is considered "abandonment," leading to closure of the asylum case. Within a few days, asylum-seekers were facing difficulties complying with the obligation to present themselves before COMAR or the INM due to a lack of information about reporting dates and locations. INM also increased transportation of people on the move from the northern border to the south, mainly Villahermosa, Tabasco.
- A study [published](#) by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in January 2024 reported that 53% of Venezuelans living in Mexico and left Venezuela looking for better living conditions have no paid work in Mexico. This could drive some living in Mexico to move onward due to lack of livelihood opportunities.



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- Throughout the reporting period, [kidnappings](#) continued to be registered in the northern cities of Matamoros and Reynosa, as well as in Tabasco near the southern border. Security concerns in shelters and settlements in northern Mexico, in cities such as Chihuahua and Tamaulipas, have increased due to the presence of organized crime groups, forcing some people to leave irregularly. Long wait times of five to seven months for a CBP One appointment may also contribute to their decision to leave irregularly.
- An R4V partner's monitoring of an informal settlement of about 100 tents of mainly Venezuelan families in northern Mexico City identified significant challenges related to mental health among the population, including a case of suicide. In the northern states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo León, there were about 13,000 persons hosted in 127 shelters daily, the majority with the intention to continue to the U.S., representing only a part of the total population in the north, as many decide to rent private accommodation and hotels. In addition to the tens of thousands of refugees and migrants present in Mexico's northern states, they also host a growing number of internally displaced persons, placing increased pressures on shelter capacities.
- During the reporting period, the [Mexican government](#) announced the creation of new multiservice centres to provide services to refugees and migrants. Centres are being built in Tapachula and one in Huixtla, Chiapas, while another centre will be opened in Veracruz. These would be one-stop shops to provide information to people on the move and Mexican returnees, including referrals to access health services, education, employment opportunities, and assisted returns.
- During the third week of March, [Minister of Foreign Affairs](#) Alicia Bárcena announced that Mexico signed an agreement with Venezuela to deport Venezuelans and reached deals with Mexican and Venezuelan companies to employ them. The Mexican government will give those willing to return some [\\$110 a month for six months](#), as part of a program in which they will also have the opportunity to work for different companies in both countries.

## Response



### EDUCATION

In **Costa Rica**, 241 refugee and migrant children, both in-transit and in-destination, received education and reading stimulation kits and those enrolled in the public education system benefited from school supplies.

In **Mexico**, 92 refugees and migrants received financial assistance to have access to public and private education services, including university education. Sixty-nine refugee and migrant families with children and adolescents received cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to cover the costs of fees, materials and uniforms in public and private schools to mitigate the risk of dropping out due to a lack of financial resources and six Venezuelans received financial support to validate their diplomas.



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FOOD SECURITY

In **Costa Rica**, R4V partners provided food assistance to 177 refugees and migrants, both in-destination and in-transit, through the distribution of a food card. Different amounts of financial aid were provided, and beneficiaries are selected based on their vulnerability, including gender protection concerns, women-led households, elderly women, work situation and the number of family members.



HEALTH

In **Costa Rica**, 963 Venezuelans benefitted from medical insurance under the Costa Rican Social Security Fund agreement with a partner. An R4V partner, provided first-level psychosocial care for 31 refugees and migrants. Through financing of a nursing professional, an R4V partner provided primary medical care to 1,657 refugees and migrants at the reception facility in the southern zone temporarily hosting refugees and migrants in-transit.

In **Panama**, 9,719 refugees and migrants in-transit received access to health services and assistance at the temporary migratory reception stations and through itinerant and permanent teams in Darien.



INTEGRATION

In **Panama**, 16 refugees and migrants in-destination received capacity building and orientation on self-employment (through limited companies and/or cooperatives). On International Women's Day, 256 individuals received sensibilization and capacity building training by R4V partners on prioritizing women's occupation of public spaces and promoting their learning through thematic sessions. Moreover, 350 people were reached through social cohesion activities on the use of public spaces in the neighbourhood of El Harino in La Chorrera.

In **Mexico**, five Venezuelan refugees and migrants benefitted from vocational support.



NUTRITION

In **Panama**, 3,366 refugee and migrant children in-transit (0-59 months) benefitted from lifesaving nutrition and maternal child health services, through strengthening institutional capacities to provide lifesaving nutrition and maternal child health services with an emphasis on identifying cases of malnutrition in children under five years in Darien.



MULTIPURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE (MPC)

In **Costa Rica**, R4V partners reached 108 refugees and migrants in-destination with multipurpose cash support to cover basic needs. In **Panama**, 52 refugees and migrants in-destination received multipurpose cash assistance.

In **Mexico**, 99 Venezuelans received humanitarian assistance in the form of MPC to cover their basic needs.

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## GENERAL PROTECTION

In **Panama**, 2,212 refugees and migrants in-transit and 46 in-destination received information services, guidance, and legal assistance to access the refugee status application process and essential rights.

In **Mexico**, Venezuelans in-destination received protection-related CVA for naturalization processes and support to access programs for people with specific needs.



## CHILD PROTECTION

In **Costa Rica**, partners provided trainings to 15 local leaders and personnel of institutions, NGOs and municipalities from key communities' border and transit communities on Child Protection. The training concentrated on child rights, national and international child protection norms and key strategies to prevent violence against children (VAC) and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

Furthermore, partners assisted 3,681 refugees and migrants' children through the installment and development of Child Safe Spaces in key points of the in-transit migration routes, specifically in Paso Canoas (southern border), the 10-7 bus station in San José (CR Metro Area) and in Tablillas, Los Chiles (northern border). These Child Safe Spaces provided child protection support services, referral, and information for the prevention of violence and child rights compliance, learning and psychosocial support and legal aid.

In **Panama**, 10,174 refugee and migrant children in-transit received psychosocial support and early childhood development (ECD) interventions through Child-Friendly Spaces at the Migrant Reception Stations in alliance with local government and communities in Chiriqui and Darien Province. Additionally, 85 children in-transit benefitted from the technical support given by R4V partners to the National Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family to implement and sustain alternative care measures for unaccompanied and separated children and protection services focused on border provinces.



## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

In **Panama**, 5,244 refugees and migrants in-transit received psychosocial support and preventive activities within self-care spaces at the ETRM, in alliance with local government and communities in Chiriqui and Darien Provinces.



## SHELTER

In **Costa Rica**, together with the government, R4V partners developed a network of available hotels to provide short-term accommodation for highly vulnerable families with children. Support was provided via hotel vouchers to 36 refugees and migrants.



**WASH**

In **Costa Rica**, R4V partners conducted 8 small-scale repairs and contracting of WASH facilities in key points along the main in-transit routes for access to safe water and sanitation, specifically in the EMISUR in Paso Canoas and various bus stations. Additionally, 1,382 refugees and migrants in-transit received basic supplies for family hygiene (soap, hand disinfectant gels, menstrual hygiene products, toilet paper, etc.).

In **Panama**, 1,726 refugees and migrants received hygiene kits, while 62,294 refugees and migrants were provided with lifesaving water, sanitation, and hygiene services in the ETRM in Darien.

For additional information on activities reported by partners, see the [new subregional activity monitoring dashboard](#)

For additional information on funding reported, see the [funding dashboard](#).

<b>PEOPLE REACHED*</b>	Education	Food Security	Health	Hum. Transp.	Integration	Nutrition	Shelter	WASH	Protection	GBV	Child Protection	Human trafficking & smuggling	MPC
	0.4K	0.2K	11.1K	0.0K	0.0K	3.8K	0.2K	65.6K	2.4K	5.2K	10.3K	0.0K	0.3K