



ADDRESSING FORCED DISPLACEMENT: MIRPS IN PANAMA



NATIONAL PLANS **OBJECTIVES**

- Improve **mechanisms for reception and admission**
- Respond to immediate and persistent **humanitarian and protection needs**
 - Support **host countries and communities**
 - Enhance **opportunities for durable solutions**

FOCUS AREAS:



PROTECTION



**JOBS AND
LIVELIHOODS**



**SOCIAL
PROTECTION**



EDUCATION



HEALTH

COMMITMENTS BY COUNTRY

**BELIZE · COSTA RICA · EL SALVADOR · GUATEMALA ·
HONDURAS · MEXICO · PANAMA**

MIRPS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN IN PANAMA

26 TOTAL COMMITMENTS

FOCUS AREAS:



PROTECTION
12 COMMITMENTS



**JOBS AND
LIVELIHOODS**
7 COMMITMENTS



**SOCIAL
PROTECTION**
5 COMMITMENTS



EDUCATION
3 COMMITMENT



HEALTH
1 COMMITMENTS

Panama, as a transit and asylum country, has strengthened its capacities to ensure access to refugee protection for those fleeing violence. The implementation of the MIRPS National Plan has led to a significant improvement in the access to their basic rights, livelihoods, and local integration. This includes the approval of work permits for asylum seekers admitted to the procedure, strengthening of ONPAR's presence at the southern border and the implementation of innovative employability programs, among other achievements.

However, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed. The COVID-19's emergency worsened the already vulnerable condition of some refugees and asylum seekers, forcing to re-define priorities and actions to continue providing refugees and asylum seekers protection, inclusion and humanitarian assistance.



PROTECTION

- Strengthen training processes for public servants at the national and local levels on international protection, in order to enhance their capacity to identify and refer people with protection needs. Special focus will be provided to SENAFRONT, SNM, SENAN, ONPAR, INAMU, SENNIAF, Ombudspersons Office and local authorities in priority areas.
- Promote an agreement between the Ministry of Safety and Ministry of Government (ONPAR) to formalize and set in motion referral protocols and guidelines between SNM – ONPAR, and SENAFRONT – ONPAR. In order to provide a timely response to the identification and referral of people with international protection needs in border areas and airports, and in line with what is established in Executive Decree N.5 of 2018
- Improve the registration system (TRE) to facilitate a cross-cutting revision of asylum claims among authorized public institutions, ensuring confidentiality.
- Reduce the backlog of claims submitted to ONPAR under the jurisdiction of Decree N. 23 of 1998, which gave way to the development of Law N. 5 of 1977, that approves the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.
- Facilitate the management of larger human and financial resources of ONPAR in order to ensure the capacity to provide a response to an increasing number of asylum seekers, which includes, inter alia, personnel for project management, data management, lawyers, social workers, psychologists and other relevant professions.
- Undertake meetings with technical teams of CONARE to analyze cases to be presented during ordinary meetings of the National Commission for the Protection of Refugees, with the aim of ensuring a swifter response for cases admitted by ONPAR.
- Undertake brigades to issue documents in areas of difficult access, to renew refugee identity documents.
- Promote the elaboration of a legal instrument so that people recognized as stateless can opt for a permanent residence and Panamanian nationality.
- Promote an attention and referral roadmap and a protocol between the Ministry of Government (ONPAR) and the National Institute for Women (INAMU) and other partners for refugee and asylum-seeking women, survivors of SGBV.
- Engage legal clinics of Law faculties in private and public universities in providing free orientation accompaniment and legal assistance to asylum seekers.
- Promote the university social service and or internships within ONPAR for University of Panama students undertaking careers in law, psychology, social work, archives, public administration, among others.



EDUCATION

- Share information with asylum seekers on workshops, courses and trainings provided by the National Institute for Professional Training (INADEH), as follow-up to the agreements reached in the beginning of 2019.
- Match tuition costs for refugee students who are undertaking a bachelor's degree or technical careers at University of Panama with the cost for a national, recognizing the special protection condition of this population and their recognition by the Panamanian state.
- Promote the creation of an instruction manual 'Procedure and placement tests' for the operation of Decree 1225 of 2015



HEALTH

- Promote and establish an attention roadmap and protocol between the Ministry of Government (ONPAR) and Ministry of Health (Department of mental health and other services) for the attention and referral of refugees and asylum seeker for whom it is required as a result of their mental health.



JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS

- Manage the certification of extension of work permits in cases where people recognized as refugees present a request before the Ministry of Labour and Labour Development (department of migration), with 30 days or more prior to the expiration of their permit, and that the extension request is in progress.
- Promote the issuance of work permits for asylum seekers admitted to procedure by ONPAR
- Promote the issuance of drivers licenses for asylum seekers who have possession of their claim certification issued by ONPAR
- Search for income generation alternatives for refugees. Focus will be given to institutions, the private sector and the civil society to explore alternatives and put in motion concrete strategies for the economic inclusion of refugees.
- Raise awareness within the private sector on refugees seeking employment.
- Incorporate asylum seekers admitted to procedure and refugees within the database of the Ministry of Labour, for their participation in job fairs and job exchange.
- Manage the viability of opening bank accounts for refugees



SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Launch the incorporation of actions within existing social policies for highly vulnerable refugees.
- Promote existing programmes to cover basic needs with key actors (including food and temporary shelter) for extremely vulnerable people.
- Promote the participation and consultation of communities in the design of activities and public policies and enhance joint work with identified facilitators within communities.
- Promote anti-xenophobia campaigns for different entities for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Panama.
- Promote community-based integration initiatives for refugees and host communities.