



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN PANAMA

The Republic of Panama is currently home to approximately 13,000 people in need of international protection, with 2,573 refugees and 10,272 asylum-seekers predominantly from Colombia, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, with the majority residing in the Metropolitan Area of Panama City. In addition to receiving people forced to flee, Panama is also a transit country for thousands of people from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, and countries in Africa and South Asia who cross the Darien Gap heading northwards in search of new opportunities, family reunification, or protection. In recent years, the Darien Gap has become one of the most significant and risky transit points in the region. In 2021, approximately 133,720 people entered the country irregularly through this border, a record number of people in mixed movements heading towards the north of the continent.

According to the National Migration Service, in the first seven months of 2022, more than 75,000 people crossed the Darien Gap, almost twice the total of the equivalent period in 2021, with some days reaching 1,000-1,300 entries. In 2022, the most common nationality of people in transit is Venezuelan. The majority of people seeking asylum in Panama in recent years arrived by plane, while new asylum claims from people fleeing both neighbouring and distant countries is increasing.

20 COMMITMENTS



PROTECTION
11 COMMITMENTS



EDUCATION
2 COMMITMENTS



HEALTH
1 COMMITMENT



JOBS & LIVELIHOODS
3 COMMITMENTS



SOCIAL PROTECTION
3 COMMITMENTS



PROTECTION

Continue to strengthen the asylum system by protecting the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees; reinforcing reception capacity in border areas; and reinforcing capacities for the identification, referral, and care of persons in need of international protection or at risk of statelessness.

- **Continuous strengthening of training processes for public officials** at the national and local levels in matters of international protection, to expand their abilities to identify and refer people with protection needs (refugees and stateless persons). In addition to MIRE, the Electoral Tribunal (Civil Registry), SENAFRONT, SNM, SENAN, ONPAR, CONARE, INAMU, SENNIAF, the Ombudsman's Office and local authorities in prioritized areas, officials from other relevant state entities will be included.
- **Develop a care, identification, and referral protocol** between the Ministry of Security (SNM and SENAFRONT) and the Ministry of Government, as established in Executive Decree no. 5 of 2018.
- **Improve the national registration system**, incorporate biometrics, and issue a new card with QR codes to facilitate the verification of asylum-seekers between authorized public institutions, while ensuring data confidentiality.

- **Speed up the processing of asylum claims** by reducing the delay in applications through the restructuring of internal processes, as well as the development of technical tools.
- **Continue facilitating the hiring of human resources** (lawyers, social workers, psychologists, and other related professions) for ONPAR, to have sufficient capacity to respond to the growing number of requests.
- **Ensure that no child is born stateless and ensure birth registration to prevent statelessness** through carrying out birth registration and registration days in border areas.
- **Continue developing inter-institutional sessions for issuing and renewing documents** (temporary and permanent residence, and defined or indefinite work permits) in areas that are difficult to access.
- **Promote the issuance of driver's licenses** to asylum-seekers who maintain an active application certified by ONPAR.
- **Develop training and awareness programmes** for officials to identify stateless persons.
- **Provide care for female refugees/asylum-seekers and survivors of gender-based violence** through the development and implementation of a care, referral, and counter-referral protocol between the Ministry of Government (ONPAR) and the National Institute for Women (INAMU), and the promotion of the Attention Route.
- Encourage legal clinics of the Faculties of Law of public and private universities to **provide guidance, support, and free legal assistance to asylum-seekers.**



EDUCATION

Continue promoting equitable and quality education by strengthening national systems to foster inclusion, resilience, and participation of children and youth in host communities.

- Promote the development of **instructions, a procedural manual, and level tests** for the operationalization of Decree 1225 of October 21, 2015.
- **Socialization of information for refugees** about the availability of courses, workshops, and trainings provided by the National Institute of Professional Training and Training for Human Development (INADEH), in follow-up to the agreements reached at the beginning of 2019.



JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS

Expand opportunities for integration of the refugee and asylum-seeking population into Panama's economic and social systems, increasing their self-sufficiency through access to formal employment, vocational training, and income-generating opportunities.

- **Raise awareness amongst the private sector** about the refugee population, who are in search of employment.
- Explore the feasibility of **opening bank accounts for recognized refugees.**
- **Promote inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers admitted for processing in the database of the Ministry of Labour**, for their participation in job listings and employment fairs.



HEALTH

Ensure equitable access to public health services, promoting knowledge and coordination among relevant actors to facilitate referral processes for refugees and asylum-seekers.

- **Continue to guarantee access to public health services** and promote referral processes among civil society actors (for refugees, asylum seekers and other persons in need of international protection).



SOCIAL PROTECTION

Promote the consolidation of comprehensive services for protection and care for people with international protection needs, continuing to promote the training of officials and the coordination of government agencies to ensure the inclusion and full access of refugees and asylum-seekers to social protection programs and services.

- Continue to facilitate the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in existing social protection programs, such as Panama Solidario, among others.
- **Continue promoting non-discrimination and inclusion campaigns** aimed at different entities to promote the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama.
- **Establish components on awareness-raising on refugee status** within the training processes of institutions that provide social protection services.