



ANNUAL REPORT

# MIRPS 2024

Comprehensive  
Regional Protection  
and Solutions  
Framework









# Costa Rica



# NATIONAL CONTEXT

## INDICATORS



**4 years**

**AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME** from the submission of an asylum claim to the decision on the claim in the first instance.



**1,373**

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND REFUGEE ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN SITUATIONS OF POVERTY** and extreme poverty benefiting from an education grant.



**12,786**

**NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS** in situations of poverty and extreme poverty.



**9,473\***

**ASYLUM-SEEKERS WHO WERE GRANTED A WORK PERMIT** during the period covered by this report.



**18,946**

**NUMBER OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS WITH LEGALLY RECOGNIZED IDENTITY documents or credentials.**

*\* From January 1 to June 2024, 75 work permit applications were submitted. Starting in June 2024, with the implementation of Decree 44501 on the reform of work permits, 9,398 permits were granted to adults.*

## Costa Rica has maintained its pledges to protect and attend to the needs of forcibly displaced people and those traveling in mixed movements.

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Costa Rica continues to welcome people who have been forced to flee their countries and cross borders in search of international protection. Thanks to its long-standing democratic tradition, strong institutions, and commitment to protecting human rights, Costa Rica is now home to 226,029 persons in need of international protection, 22,344 of whom are recognized refugees, 211,750 are asylum-seekers and 336 are stateless persons.<sup>1</sup>

The country continues to be a transit route for many people along their journey towards the north of the continent, with an estimated 269,200 people on the move, from January to September this year.

Costa Rica has maintained its pledges to protect and attend to the needs of forcibly displaced people and those traveling in mixed movements. The country's commitment to honour its pledges related to international protection has also been reflected in its actions with other countries as well as domestically. Costa Rica made multilateralism the cornerstone of its response for addressing forced displacement mobilizing international

cooperation. The country has leveraged relevant international fora to advocate for joint action at a regional level and promoted cooperative efforts across different regional mechanisms to address the plight of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons in the region and across the continent.

At the national level, the government has taken significant steps to grant access to the Costa Rican asylum system and to facilitate the integration of asylum-seekers into Costa Rican society. Such measures reverse the changes implemented through the December 2022 executive decree 43810, which established a deadline to submit asylum claims and narrowed the requirements to apply for a work permit.

In June, the government issued a new executive decree (number 44501) removing the previously established deadline for claiming asylum and extending to asylum-seekers the same protection entitlements and safeguards granted to refugees, while their claim is being resolved. In terms of socio-economic integration, the decree repeals the requirements for the granting of a work permit,

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1 Data provided by the Government Migration Office (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, DGME) as of 30 September 2024.



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which included having an employment contract and being registered in social security. From 1 July 2024 – with the entry into force of the new decree – asylum-seekers in Costa Rica receive an identification document and a work permit, allowing them to carry out formal work under the current labour legislation.

These new measures ensure that the rights of asylum-seekers in Costa Rica are respected and reflect the Costa Rican government's commitment to honor its pledges on international protection.

# PROGRESS

## Protection



### MODERNIZATION OF THE COSTA RICAN ASYLUM SYSTEM.

In May 2024, the Government of Costa Rica adopted a strategy to reduce the backlog and efficiently manage new asylum claims. The strategy encompasses eight deliverables to be submitted by December 2024: 1) Profile analysis for at-risk Nicaraguans (the output is undergoing the final revision stage); 2) Archive organisation (which is 90% complete); 3) Early process completion – data-based solutions (system adaptations for closures are being completed); 4) Data update and confirmation exercise (exercise started in October 2024); 5) Differentiated case processing modalities (simplified/accelerated differentiated

process in progress); 6) Digitalization of the asylum system; 7) Improvements in the coordination of the strategy; and 8) Enhanced capacity for processing new asylum claims. As part of the strategy, the government has taken measures that will facilitate refugees' access to documentation in two ways: firstly, it has gradually increased its capacity to process asylum claims (from 250 to 510 interviews per week between January 2023 and September 2024), leading to a 44% rise in the number of claims compared with the previous eight months; secondly, the Executive Decree 44501, issued in May, has removed previous barriers to the access to work permits, resulting in more than 31,000 work permits being issued to asylum-seekers between January and September 2024.

## Healthcare



### **ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLLECTIVE HEALTHCARE ARRANGEMENT, IN THE FORM OF TEMPORARY VOLUNTARY INSURANCE FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, TO GUARANTEE THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE AND FACILITATE THEIR INTEGRATION.**

In 2020, the Costa Rican government, through its Social Security System (CCSS, by its Spanish acronym) – the national public healthcare service provider – signed an agreement with UNHCR to provide basic healthcare insurance to 6,000 asylum-seekers and refugees with chronic health conditions and no other medical insurance plan. The agreement has been periodically renewed since then, until 2024, when a fifth agreement

was signed, granting medical coverage to 5,000 people from January to December 2024. Given its impact, this initiative is considered a good practice and served as a benchmark for cooperation with international partners. Therefore, it was used as a model for a parallel agreement signed among the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN, by its Spanish acronym), the University of Costa Rica, and the CCSS to extend the medical insurance to an additional 3,775 people from September 2023 to August 2024. The agreement – signed in September – was financed by the European Union through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, by its Spanish acronym).

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## Jobs and livelihoods



### **PROGRESS WAS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY FOR MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN COSTA RICA.**

This strategy is part of the Health Coverage and Access to Decent Employment for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Vulnerable Conditions Project in Costa Rica, which is funded by the European Union and led by AECID. By strengthening employment intermediation services, the strategy aims to propose solutions to this population's limited access to work

and to facilitate their job search. So far this year, and within the framework of this strategy, 520 refugees have registered on the brete.cr platform, and intermediation services have been provided to 14 refugees and 12 asylum-seekers. As a multi-sectoral initiative that brings together the efforts of various actors, discussions and webinars have been held with the private sector to raise awareness among 105 companies for the recruitment of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Similarly, employment intermediation talks on the recruitment and employability of this population have been given to 23 companies



and 16 civil society organizations. A job fair was also held in the province of Guanacaste, with 1,797 job openings in high-demand sectors such as tourism, construction, and commerce. Additionally,

employment inspectors from the National Inspection Directorate were trained on human trafficking and refugees' labor rights protection through five capacity-building workshops.

## Education



**THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION (MEP, BY ITS SPANISH ACRONYM) HAS MADE PROGRESS IN ITS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES TO ENSURE ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKER CHILDREN AND THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE COSTA RICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Firstly, an Intra-Institutional Working Team for Support to Students of Foreign Origin, at Risk of Statelessness and Returnees was formed by means of an official note DVM-AC-0080-01-2024, dated 31 January 2024, which addresses actions or situations that may involve these populations.

In addition, audiovisual material was produced in commemoration of World Refugee Day to raise awareness among students, teachers, and educators on refugees' contribution to Costa Rican society and to promote their integration. This material was broadcast on the radio and posted on social media. The MEP also trained all its educational supervisors (202 people) from the country's Regional Education Directorates on matters related to access to the public education system for people on the move, support of positive coexistence in educational spaces, promotion of interculturalism, and combating xenophobia.



## Costa Rica is the home where an asylum-seeker has found stability and peace

BY NATALIA DIAZ AND MATEO PRIVITERA

Six years ago, Yomaira and her family were forced to leave Venezuela after receiving threats. They feared losing their home, not being able to access food, and struggling to provide their children with an education in a safe place.

“They were threatening not to sell us the food they usually sold, simply because we no longer supported their political ideology,” said Yomaira.

Displaced due to this situation, she and her family tried to integrate into other countries. However, continuous travels and incidents of xenophobic violence wore Yomaira, her husband, and children

down. After a difficult journey through the Darién jungle, they made it to Costa Rica in April 2024.

In Los Chiles, a Costa Rican community close to the Nicaraguan border, Yomaira found the peace of mind that she so desperately needed and was able to apply for asylum and receive support for her family. Through the Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (Joint Institute for Social Aid, IMAS, by its Spanish acronym), World Vision, and the local organization CENDEROS, Yomaira’s situation began to improve.



My greatest achievement here in Costa Rica – and I say this with great pride – is to have found peace. I feel very much at peace and extremely relieved, and we have gradually been buying little things for ourselves.”

For Yomaira, the key elements in her integration process are the stable employment that she and her husband have secured and the support of the community. Her children have also been given free access to public healthcare and education, in compliance with Costa Rican law.

“Whether it’s at the hospital or at school, they treat you with so much love. It’s been many years since I last heard those words: ‘It’s our pleasure, we’re here to help you.’ I really like all that the community of Los Chiles has to offer, both to natives and to us,” Yomaira explains.

“My greatest achievement here in Costa Rica – and I say this with great pride – is to have found peace. I feel very much at peace and extremely relieved, and we have gradually been buying little things for ourselves.”





