



PANAMA

IFRC network mid-year report, January – June 2023

24 November 2023

IN SUPPORT OF THE RED CROSS SOCIETY OF PANAMA



23

National Society branches



116

National Society staff



1,716

National Society volunteers

PEOPLE REACHED

Ongoing emergency operations



16,372

Climate and environment



38

Disasters and crises



2,314

Health and wellbeing



38,641

Migration and displacement



35,034

Values, power and inclusion



12,120

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

in Swiss francs (CHF)

Total	Funding requirements	6.1M
IFRC	Emergency Operations Funding requirements	2.0M
	Emergency Operations Income	240,000
	Longer-term Funding requirements	2.6M
	Longer-term Income	2.5M
Participating National Societies	Funding requirements	30,000
	Income	24,000
Host National Society other funding sources	Funding requirements	1.5M

[Click here for more IFRC financial information](#)

Appeal numbers **MAAPA002, MDR43008**


ONGOING EMERGENCY INDICATORS

MDR43008 / Central America & Mexico / Migration Crisis

People reached by National Societies with contextually appropriate health services	16,000
People (and households) offered protection assistance specifically related to displacement and migration	7,000
People reached with restoring family links (RFL) services	3,000
People reached through humanitarian service points (migrants and displaced people)	2,000
People (and households) reached by hygiene promotion activities in the response period	213
Number of litres of safe water distributed through RCRC emergency water supply (cumulative)	8M
Number of satisfaction surveys completed	2,000
Number of humanitarian service points established (migrants and displaced people)	1

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Climate	People reached with activities to address rising climate risks	38
	People reached with shelter support	2,000
	People reached with livelihoods support	1,000
Disasters and crises	People reached per year with support services, in-kind, cash and voucher assistance for emergency response and recovery	360
	People reached with disaster risk reduction	79
	People reached with contextually appropriate health services	39,000
Health and wellbeing	People reached with contextually appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services	10,000
	People trained in first aid	Applicable data not available
	Migrants and displaced persons reached with services for assistance and protection	35,000

Migration and displacement	Number of Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs) that provided assistance and/or protection to people on the move along land based migration routes	6
	Advocacy, dialogues, educational or communication initiatives to change the legal, policy, or operational environment to better assist and protect people on the move?	1
	Data collection, research, analysis or other information management initiatives to better assist and protect people on the move are available	Yes
Values, power and inclusion	People reached by protection, gender and inclusion programming	 12,000

ENABLING FUNCTIONS

National Society Development	All volunteers are covered by health, accident and death compensation	Yes
Accountability and agility	National Society has demonstrated progress in digital transformation according to the digital maturity model outlined in the IFRC Digital Transformation Strategy	Yes
	PSEA policy is in place to enforce prevention and support survivors	Yes

IFRC NETWORK SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

	Multilateral Support		Bilateral Support				
		Climate	Migration and displacement	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling Functions	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing
National Society							
British Red Cross	●						
Canadian Red Cross Society	●						
Italian Red Cross				●			
Japanese Red Cross Society	●						
Netherlands Red Cross	●						
Spanish Red Cross			●				
Swedish Red Cross	●						

 Supported

OVERALL CONTEXT

Context

In Panama, the year 2023 has been complex and constantly evolving. The country has experienced steady economic growth in recent years, recovering from the effects of COVID-19. However, it has also experienced social problems, such as poverty and inequality. More than 20% of the population is living in poverty, and the country has one of the highest rates of income inequality in Latin America. Crime and violence are also increasing. As of June 2023, there have been 277 homicides, approximately 30% more than those registered in the same period for 2022.

There is a significant increase in the flow of migrants crossing through Darién this year, including an increase in the number of children and adolescents in transit. Those who undertake the journey encounter not only the dangers of the Darién jungle – one of the most dangerous irregular migration routes in the world – but also protection risks and multiple types of violence, including sexual violence.

In July, Field Response Teams from the Red Cross and other humanitarian actors identified the presence of criminal groups dedicated to human trafficking and smuggling on the migratory route. According to authorities of the National Border Service (SENAFRONT), this year several operations have been carried out in the area that have led to a decrease in cases of crime against the migrant population in transit. Migrants at the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations in Darién confirm that the interventions of SENAFRONT have led to a decrease in incidents of attacks and robberies, although instances of group kidnappings and sexual violence are still occurring, mainly targeting women (who currently represent 25% of the migrants crossing from Colombia).

On 15 February 2023, a bus carrying 66 migrants crashed in the province of Chiriquí, Panama. The vehicle had left the province of Darién, where the migrants had arrived after crossing the border between Panama and Colombia through irregular jungle crossings. The affected migrants came from Central and South America and other countries, in search of safety, protection, better opportunities and stability in the north of the continent. The accident left 40 dead and more than 20 injured.

The impact of migration is also evident in the original communities present on the irregular routes that cross the Darién region and the Emberá-Wounaan region. These towns, such as Bajo Chiquito, often receive flows that quintuple their own populations, creating economic bubbles that are not sustainable in the long-term and are highly dependent on the migratory phenomenon.

Key achievements

The Red Cross Society of Panama has strengthened its capacities in the area of Disaster Risk Management with support from the DG ECHO Pilot Programmatic Partnership (PPP). A National Response Plan for Emergencies, Crises and Disasters was approved and then disseminated in the three regions of the country. The Panamanian Red Cross also participated in the Third Regional Simulation of Disaster Response and Humanitarian Assistance with several countries in the region. The simulation allowed the National Society to improve its accreditations in order to have a certified Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) group that meets the standards of the International Advisory Group on Search and Rescue Operations (INSARAG). The National Society is developing a Disaster Risk Management course, which will be piloted soon.

The Panamanian Red Cross is providing health assistance and services to migrants at the Temporary Migratory Reception Stations in both Darién and Chiriquí. The National Society provided support in restoring family links to ensure that migrants in transit through Darién and Chiriquí are able to communicate with their families. The National Society is also supporting the transit communities in the Darién area – mainly Bajo Chiquito – with safe water and sanitation, as well as hygiene promotion activities. The National Society has supported refugees and asylum-seekers to develop home gardens for food security and income generation through its Livelihoods Programme.

The Community Engagement and Accountability Unit (CEA) of the Panamanian Red Cross has had bilateral exchanges with the Honduran Red Cross. The CEA Team has disseminated key messages through local radio stations about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Fundamental Principles, the auxiliary role of the Panamanian Red Cross, and hygiene promotion, among other topics.

The Panamanian Red Cross disseminated key messages on disaster risk management, such as the importance of contingency plans, to vulnerable communities in Tierras Altas, in the province of Chiriquí, and Soloy, in the Ngäbe-Buglé Comarca. Key messages have been translated into the Ngäbere language so that the people of the Ngäbe-Buglé region can take precautions and act safely in the event of an emergency.

Progress has been made to update the Red Cross law in Panama, which dates back to 1917. The proposal was accepted by the authorities and is in the approval process with the National Assembly. The National Society has also improved branch capacity by financing the renovation of select branches.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency Appeal name	Mexico and Central America migration crisis
Appeal number	MDR43008
Timeframe	17 months (29 July 2022 to 31 December 2023)
Funding requirements	IFRC Appeal: CHF 18 million Total Federation-wide: CHF 28 million
Appeal link	Mexico and Central America migration crises Emergency Appeal
Most recent operations update	Mexico and Central America migration crisis Appeal 12 month Operations Update
Link to operational strategy	Panama Operational Strategy

SECTORS OF INTERVENTION



Multi-purpose Cash

Objective: *The most vulnerable displaced persons have their basic needs met through the use of cash assistance.*

The Panamanian Red Cross has not yet started implementing multi-purpose cash assistance, which is a component of the DG ECHO PPP programme. The National Society has had to prioritize responding to the needs arising from the constant change in migratory flows. There is also limited availability of funds and low willingness of the authorities to provide assistance.

The Panamanian Red Cross through its bilateral partner, UNHCR, continues to support the refugee population in Panama, with the delivery of cash assistance for transportation, food, shelter kits and health.

In the DREF response to floods, vouchers were distributed to affected families to purchase hardware and materials for the reconstruction of their homes.



Health & Care

(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)

Objective: *The most vulnerable and displaced persons receive high quality care and sanitary services, including mental health and psychosocial support.*

As the influx of migrants increases, the Panamanian Red Cross is providing humanitarian assistance and protection to migrants, with support from the DG ECHO PPP programme. Health teams are providing care to migrants in Darién at two Temporary Migratory Reception Stations in San Vicente and Lajas Blancas.

The main diseases identified among the migrants are acute diarrhea, wounds in lower limbs, common cold, hypertension, diabetes, skin abscesses, and acute tonsillitis. Cases of dehydration have been detected and hydration kits have been delivered, together with other partners. The majority of people receiving care are males over 18 years.

In the Temporary Migratory Reception Station of Lajas Blancas, people from the local community have also come to request medical attention. In recent months, with the arrival of the rainy season, cases of skin lesions and diarrhea have increased.

One of the main challenges is the limited availability of medicines and supplies to cover all the needs. The cost of the medicine and supplies is high, and the procurement process is extensive.

Through the Livelihoods Programme, the Panamanian Red Cross provides periodic psychosocial support services to the refugee population.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Objective: *Integral support in water, sanitation and hygiene is provided to the most vulnerable people, reducing the risk of illness and improving the dignity of the target population.*

The provision of safe drinking water continues at the Temporary Migratory Reception Station of Lajas Blancas and in the host community of Bajo Chiquito, as well as the distribution of hygiene kits.

One of the main challenges identified is that local authorities have indicated that the space for the Temporary Migratory Reception Station of San Vicente is inadequate. The space is still under warranty, so repairs must be carried out by the company hired to do the work. The expiry date of the warranty is unknown, so humanitarian actors implementing sanitation and hygiene actions can only make recommendations.

With the increase in irregular migratory flows, the increase in solid waste is a challenge. Daily cleaning is not enough to keep the Temporary Migratory Reception Station in good sanitary condition.



Protection, Gender and Inclusion

Objective: *Affected, displaced and refugee populations fleeing crisis are safe from harm of violence, discrimination and exclusion, and their needs and rights are met.*

The main protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) actions carried out are the delivery of key messages, safety information, safe referrals and psycho-emotional support. Electric generators have been set up at the Temporary Migratory Reception Station to facilitate restoring family links, battery charging, WIFI and paging services. However, the number of people seeking to make a free call has increased. A post has also been installed in Paso Canoas at the border crossing with Costa Rica.

In the Migration Programme, it has been possible to adapt the facilities where services are provided in the Lajas Blancas and San Vicente stations in the province of Darién to improve access to services and improve security for migrants. Signage was placed in the different areas of the stations and improvements were made, following the PGI approach.

Through the actions of the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence project, the Panamanian Red Cross has started raising awareness of PGI among volunteers through online training.



Community Engagement and Accountability

Objective: *The diverse needs, priorities and preferences of affected people guide the response through a people-centred approach and meaningful community involvement.*

Eighty-six (86) per cent of the migrant population surveyed perceives that they have received the services of the Panamanian Red Cross in a safe, accessible, responsible and participatory manner. The services they highlighted are how to contact relatives, obtain food and access health services. These surveys allow the National Society to identify where to improve, what services to expand, and what messages to reinforce.

Knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys have been developed to improve programming, assess the effectiveness of interventions, assess the beliefs and behaviours of a target population, and reveal misconceptions or barriers to behaviour change. Among the first results were that there are no early warning systems, a slight increase in HIV cases has been identified, and dengue was identified as very worrying for the health of communities.

The Panamanian Red Cross has carried out behaviour change activities using the Youth as Agents of Behaviour Change methodology with the host communities in the Bajo Chiquito school, in the Emberá-Wounaan region.

Six radio spots were developed, disseminating key messages through radio stations such as Radio Ancón and Voz sin Fronteras.

Suggestion and complaint boxes have been placed at the headquarters of the Panamanian Red Cross to receive feedback, as well as the use of QR codes for communities (e.g., communities assisted with DREF funds).



Migration

Objective: *Analyse the specific vulnerabilities of people on the move, including migrants, refugees and returnees, and address their needs and rights with targeted humanitarian assistance, protection and humanitarian diplomacy, in coordination with relevant stakeholders and sectors.*

The Panamanian Red Cross maintains humanitarian service points (HSPs). In the Darién Province, there are fixed points at the Temporary Migratory Reception Stations of Lajas Blancas and San Vicente, as well as a mobile HSP. In the Province of Chiriquí, there is a fixed Temporary Migratory Reception Station in Planes de Gualaca and a fixed point with restoring family links services in Paso Canoas, at the border crossing with Costa Rica.

One of the limitations has been that the mobile HSP suffered mechanical problems and is temporarily out of service. However, as of May, a second mobile HSP was acquired with funds from the DG ECHO Pilot Programmatic Partnership (PPP) programme, which is providing services in the Lajas Blancas station.

Health services have continued at the different Temporary Migratory Reception Stations. A 66% increase in health services was registered in the first half of 2023 compared to the first half of 2022. This is in addition to the health actions developed with the maternal and child project, funded by UNICEF.

Similarly, migrants are supported with the delivery of differentiated hygiene, dignity, and nutritional kits to cover specific needs. Through the dissemination of self-care messages and delivery of safety information, migrants are provided with relevant information about routes, places to get help and messages of care during their journey.

Restoring family links services provide accessible and free assistance with calls, battery charging, WIFI, and search for missing persons. The installation of safe water production plants in the Temporary Migratory Reception Stations of Lajas Blancas, Bajo Chiquito, La Peñita is providing migrants and host communities with access to safe water. Canaan Quince is supported with inputs for the production of safe water.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

Through the DG ECHO PPP programme, the Panamanian Red Cross carried out a Training of Trainers in Blue Schools and the Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+). Committees trained in these methodologies have approached schools to be able to carry out training with students next year and implement the Blue Schools approach in 18 schools.

The local branches of the Panamanian Red Cross carried out beach cleaning, recycling, and tree planting activities with a focus on caring for the environment.

Twenty-five volunteers were trained in climate-smart livelihoods (before, during and after an emergency) to be able to implement livelihood projects and encourage the sustainable development of a community, maintaining its principles and customs.



Disasters and crises

During the first half of 2023, the National Response Plan for Emergencies, Crises and Disasters of the Panamanian Red Cross was approved. It was disseminated among volunteers and staff in the three regions of the country.

With the support of the DG ECHO PPP programme, the Panamanian Red Cross has strengthened its Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team. The National Society has also worked with communities of the province of Chiriquí to develop early warning systems in coordination with local authorities.

Key messages for risk preparedness and prevention were developed in the Ngäbe language. The messages include information on what residents can do in case of floods, how they can prepare for an emergency, the contents of the emergency backpack, and how to prevent malaria and mosquito breeding sites. The translation of key messages into the native language reinforces the PGI approach.

A toolbox for risk management is under development in coordination with State institutions, such as the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), the Ministry of Health (MINSAs), and other organizations, such as the Foundation for Integral Community Development and Conservation of Ecosystems in Panama (FUNDICEP), the USAID Office of Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA), RET International, and the Panama Fire Department.

As part of strengthening volunteering, workshops have been carried out on vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA), as a basis for preparedness for disaster and crisis response.

First aid training and equipment have been delivered to communities and educational centres in Soloy, Ngäbe Buglé region and transit communities in the Emberá Wounaan region, to improve emergency preparedness. Fire control and psychosocial support were included in the training of community brigades in Tierras Altas and Soloy.

At the beginning of 2023, kits were delivered to people affected by the floods in the Azuero Peninsula. The deliveries consisted of hygiene and personal hygiene kits, food bags, blankets and coupons for hardware supplies. The distributions reached 300 families in the provinces of Los Santos, Herrera and Veraguas.

The first training in humanitarian diplomacy was carried out by the IFRC. Volunteers and staff from the branches and headquarters of the Panamanian Red Cross participated.



Health and wellbeing

Through the support of the DG ECHO PPP programme, a first draft of the National Health Strategy of the Panamanian Red Cross has been developed.

Awareness-raising activities on vector control were carried out in the communities of Canaán Membrillo, Bajo Chiquito and La Peñita. The focus of the activities was on the prevention of malaria and elimination of mosquito breeding sites. Additionally, activities with children and house-to-house visits were carried out to disseminate key messages.

Water and sanitation activities were carried out at the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations in the Lajas Blancas and in the transit communities Bajo Chiquito, Canaán Membrillo and La Peñita.

The Panamanian Red Cross continues to provide support in the Home for the Elderly where it houses vulnerable men between the age of 70 and 80 years old. They are provided with food, health care and shelter. In addition, the Panamanian Red Cross continues to provide support in the Children's Home, providing care for vulnerable children from newborns to four years old. The children are provided with food, medical care, early stimulation, maternal education and recreational activities.



Migration and displacement

The number of migrants in the first half of 2023 are four times higher than the same period in 2022. This has increased the demand for services and limits the ability of agencies to respond.

The Panamanian Red Cross team raises awareness and implements safe referral routes, promoting that people who need help receive dignified and timely attention. The team provides services in basic health care, first aid, and maternal and child health. So far this year, services provided range from tending wounds, primary medical care, screening, prenatal care and first aid.

In water and sanitation, adaptations were made to the showers in the community of Canaán Membrillo, and water production plants were repaired at the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations and host communities.

The Panamanian Red Cross has developed protocols for security and access to the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations that teams must follow, to reduce risks and be prepared for any emergency.

The Panamanian Red Cross distributes humanitarian assistance through the distribution of dignity and hygiene kits differentiated according to sex and age. The availability of these kits, however, is extremely limited due to the exponential increase in demand.

For this reporting period, a mobile HSP was acquired with funds from the DG ECHO PPP programme, which will be mobilized to provide health assistance and psychosocial support to migrants at different points along the migration route.

In order to offer the same humanitarian services to migrants on the border with Costa Rica, the Panamanian Red Cross established a Temporary Migrant Reception Station in Planes de Gualaca (province of Chiriquí, on the border with Costa Rica). The services offered are medical care, basic first aid and maternal and child health, as well as providing connectivity for restoring family links.

An information management system for population movements in Central America is under development, led by the IFRC. The Panamanian Red Cross participated in the development of the baseline, design of a dashboard, and regular data collection.



Values, power and inclusion

The Panamanian Red Cross, with the support of the IFRC, has developed training activities in protection, gender and inclusion (PGI). The National Society provided basic training to management staff and volunteers who support the Migration Programme.

Through the contribution of the Italian Red Cross, the Panamanian Red Cross has begun with the implementation of the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence project, through the formation of school brigades. Volunteers have been trained and activities in schools will begin in the second semester.

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS



Strategic and operational coordination

The Panamanian Red Cross is part of the Risk Cabinet, a space where state organizations and institutions meet to coordinate the response and participate in the National Emergency Operations Centre.

The Panamanian Red Cross participates in the technical coordination tables in Darién and in Chiriquí. In this space, the agencies meet to improve their operations and find ways to work in a coordinated and efficient manner, avoiding duplication in the field. The Panamanian Red Cross also participates nationally in the Human Mobility Group.

The Panamanian Red Cross is one of the National Societies participating in the [DG ECHO Pilot Programmatic Partnership \(PPP\)](#) programme, with the support of the IFRC Central America Country Cluster Delegation in Panama. The PPP supports the National Society in disaster risk management, epidemic and pandemic preparedness, humanitarian assistance for people on the move, cash and voucher assistance, and community engagement and accountability.



National Society development

The Panamanian Red Cross, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has conducted training in international humanitarian law and safer access, to strengthen volunteer capacities.

Through IFRC's National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA) funds, the Panamanian Red Cross has developed workshops at the national level on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies. The National Society has initiated the consulting process to improve internal human resources and accounting processes.



Humanitarian diplomacy

Through funding from the DG ECHO PPP programme and with the support of IFRC, a humanitarian diplomacy workshop was carried out with volunteers from local branches and field management staff and headquarters staff.

There have been advances in updating the Red Cross law in Panama, which was approved in 1917. The proposal was accepted by the authorities, and it is in the process of approval by the National Assembly.



Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

The Panamanian Red Cross is in the process of implementing multiple projects and updated information will be available in the annual report.

Through the DG ECHO PPP programme, the Panamanian Red Cross continues to move forward in its digital transformation and digitization. The National Society seeks to strengthen its digitalization through an improved, interactive website and information portal.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

DATA SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

- **Timeframe and alignment:** The reporting timeframe for this overview is covering the period from 1 January to 30 June 2023. However, due to the diversity of the IFRC and differences in fiscal years, this coverage may not fully align for some National Societies. Mid-year reporting data may have been based on estimations, with plans to submit more robust numbers at the annual reporting stage.
- **Missing data and breakdowns:** National Societies have diverse data collection systems and processes that may not align with the standardized indicators. Data may not be available for some indicators, for some National Societies. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under or over-estimation of the efforts led by all.
- **Reporting bias:** The data informing this Federation-wide overview is self-reported by each National Society (or its designated support entity) and which is the owner and gatekeeper, and responsible for accuracy and updating. IFRC tries to triangulate the data provided by the National Societies with previous data and other data in the public domain.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) data](#)
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)
- [Evaluations database](#)

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