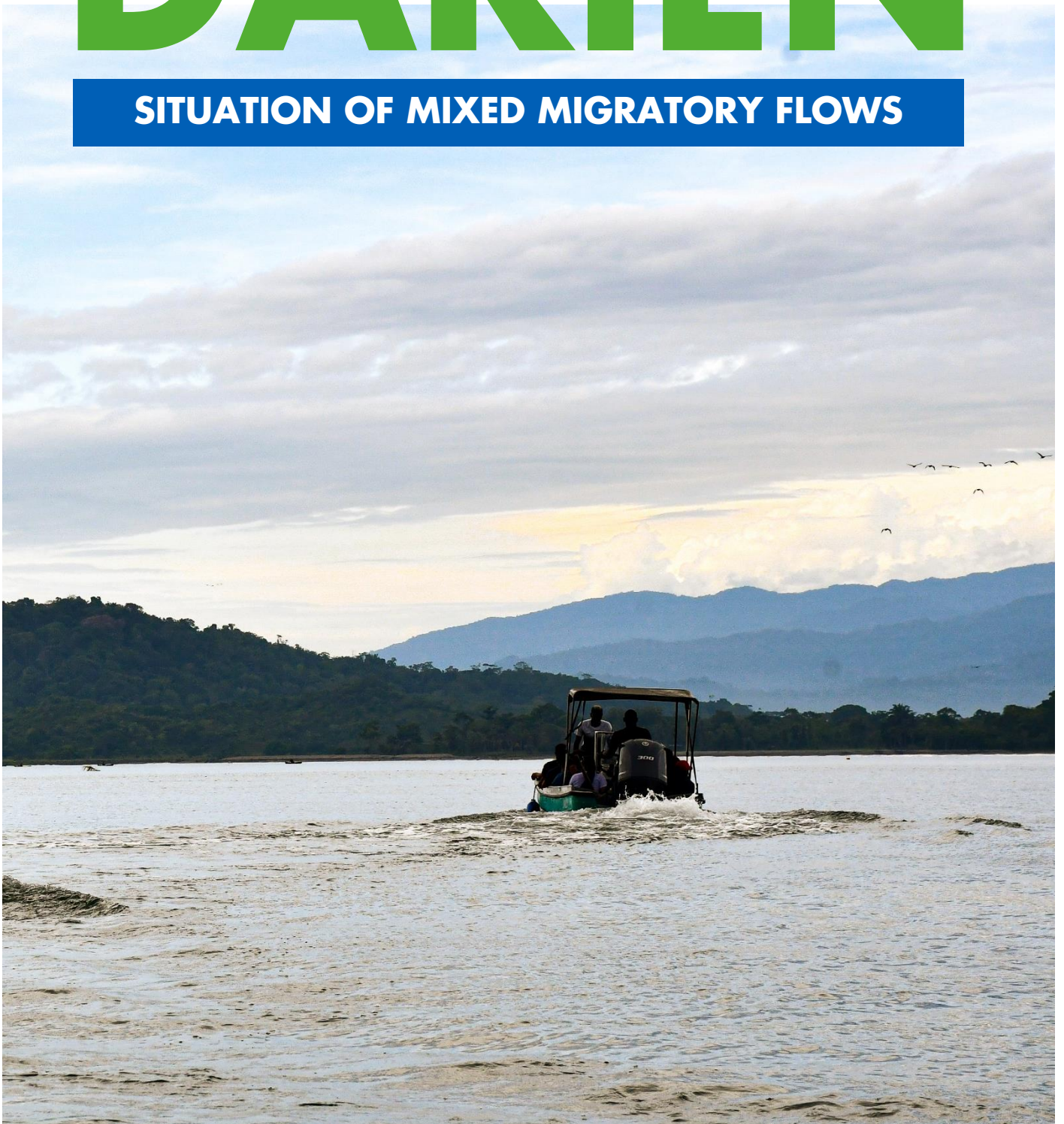


The sea where the sun rests

DARIEN

SITUATION OF MIXED MIGRATORY FLOWS



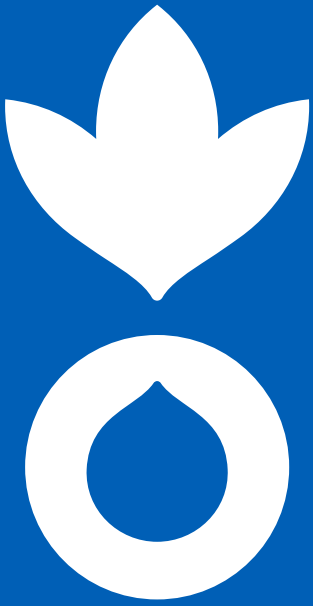
COLOMBIA
SEPTEMBER 2023





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ACRONYM

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CAF	Border Service Center
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics, Colombia
ETRM	Temporary Immigration Reception Spaces of the Government of Panama
GANE	Non-State Armed Group
GIFMM	Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows
JAC	Communal Action Boards
IOM	International Organization for Migration
UN	United Nations
PAO	Migrant Orientation and Attention Point
SNM	National Migration Service of Panama



ABSTRACT

The border corridors between Colombia and Panama, along the Pacific region, have been used for years by mixed migratory flows attempting to access Central and North America. These migratory corridors cover the province of Darien (Panama) and the north of the department of Chocó (Colombia). This entire extension of land between the two countries is historically known as the Darien region or "Tapón del Darien" and is characterized by being mostly a jungle and swampy territory that is difficult to access with extreme geographic and climatic conditions.

Crossing the Darien region is mandatory for all migrants and refugees attempting to transit irregularly from Colombia to Panama.

However, the phenomenon of migration in this region is not new. According to official statistics from the SNM (National Migration Service of Panama), from 2010 to 2020, around 120,000 people crossed through this area¹. In the last two years, Colombia and Panama have faced an unprecedented crisis of mixed migration flows. In 2022 alone, a total of 248,284 people crossed through the Darien region. In addition, in 2022, at least 36 people in transit died due to the multiple natural and security risks to which they are exposed², and the precarious conditions in which the crossing takes place, in relation to unsatisfied basic humanitarian needs in terms of drinking water, food, hygiene, sanitation, among others³.

This report summarizes the findings identified during the exploratory mission carried out by Action Against Hunger team (Colombia mission) in the Colombian border territory of the Darien region which includes the municipalities of Acandí (Chocó), Necoclí, Turbo and Apartadó (Antioquia). These areas were prioritized because of their geographic importance in the dynamics of migratory flows. The main objective of the mission was to understand the situation of the people, their expectations, priorities, and main needs, as well as the possibilities of attention from Action Against Hunger. The exploratory mission was carried out between the months of July and August and the beginning of the assistance in September 2023.

The findings allow us to understand the main characteristics of migratory movements through Colombia with a destination in the United States, as well as the transit through the Darien region on the border with Panama. It also identifies the humanitarian conditions and vulnerability of both the migrant and refugee population, as well as the host and transit communities in the border territory. In addition, it presents the current institutional response (August 2023), the role played by international cooperation agencies and the possible fields of intervention for Action Against Hunger in accordance with its humanitarian mandate.

¹ GIFMM (2023). Characterization of Mixed Movements towards Central and North America.

² IOM (2023). 2022 Report doubles the number of migrants on the dangerous Darien Jungle route.

³ GIFMM (2023). Characterization of Mixed Movements towards Central and North America.

METHODOLOGY

The exploratory mission "Mixed migratory flows in the Darien region" was carried out in the departments of Chocó and Antioquia, due to their strategic location on the border with Panama. The prioritized municipalities were Acandí (Chocó), Necoclí, Turbo and Apartadó (Antioquia). The targeting of these geographic areas was based on their importance in the connection between the Caribbean Sea and Central America, as well as the previous identification of these municipalities as key points in the dynamics of mixed migratory flows in the Darien region. Currently, the targeted areas are the most recurrent places for migrants and refugees in transit to Central and North America.

The methodological development of the exploratory mission was framed in the collection of primary information with a qualitative approach through the field work of the Action Against Hunger team, composed of multidisciplinary professionals. Among the instruments used to collect primary sources were interviews and focus groups with vulnerable migrant and refugee populations, interviews with key local institutional and cooperation actors, as well as participation in humanitarian response coordination spaces.

A total of 12 case studies and life histories were applied: 9 semi-structured interviews; 7 focus groups and 3 spaces for participation with the humanitarian architecture. Additionally, a qualitative instrument was integrated as a life history, from which 12 tools were collected, to investigate in depth, the specific narratives of the migrant population. Regarding the criteria for the integration of the focus group, the participation of women, men, boys, and girls was ensured (See Annex I).

The selection of key actors was based on a *purposive sampling*⁴, integrating different criteria such as type of actor, roles, and territorial presence. In the implementation of the qualitative instruments, priority was given to the points with the highest concentration of migrants and refugees in each of the prioritized municipalities, in places such as: camps, settlement areas, local institutions, areas where cooperation services are offered and river ports. The secondary sources considered for the review of information included official information related to migration and human rights issues of the Colombian State, as well as information from international humanitarian organizations related to the general dynamics of migration. The data analysis was framed within the qualitative approach of primary and secondary sources. This analytical approach provided descriptive data on the characteristics of mixed migratory flows, the vulnerabilities and needs of the populations affected by the migratory crisis, the impact of the migration phenomenon in the Colombian territory of the Darien region and the roles played by State institutions, international cooperation organizations and local community groups.

⁴ The fundamental interest of the sample in the framework of qualitative research is not measurement, but the understanding of social phenomena and processes in all their complexity. Many of the questions that arise revolve around the meaning they have for the subjects involved. For this reason, the place that the participants occupy within the social, cultural and historical context of which they are a part is of paramount importance. Decisions that in a probabilistic sampling design would be considered as sources of bias, in a qualitative inquiry are a way to guarantee the rigor of the approach" (Source: Carolina Martínez-Salgado (2012) "Sampling in qualitative research. Basic principles and some controversies - Ciencia & Saúde Coletiva, 17(3): 613-619, 2012).

I. CONTEXT



“You have to get in shape, your body is not prepared for the jungle, and I also prepared myself psychologically with what I saw on social networks”

Juan Carlos

It was not easy for Juan Carlos to make the decision to leave the life he had built. The trip to the United States had been planned for a long time, but the videos and photos he saw on social networks stopped him from making the decision. It was some Colombian friends who had managed to get there who encouraged him to try. *“At first I was afraid because I didn't see anything positive on the networks, but they told me that things were better”*, he explains.

Before embarking on his journey through the Darien Jungle from Barranquilla, Colombia, he prepared himself physically and mentally. He built some concrete blocks and walked two to three hours a day in the backyard of his house. *“You have to get in shape, your body is not prepared for the jungle, and I also prepared myself psychologically with what I saw on social networks”*, he says. The day he felt that he and his family were ready, they began their journey.

The house was totally unoccupied because they had to sell everything they had: household appliances, two bicycles, an industrial plant. *“We sold it for two million (national currency), but they barely gave us one million. Supposedly they are going to give us the rest. There are people who take advantage”*, he adds. In addition, they cut the daily budget and tried not to spend too much to raise as much money as possible.

A metal-mechanic welder by profession, he started a business selling flavored water and little by little he saved to buy the machines for the workshop.

Now his brother-in-law is the one who will help him continue with the workshop to generate the income that will allow him to continue his journey. *“My wife, a brother-in-law and two friends left in order to have a better economic situation because everyday food and gasoline prices go up. We could not subsist on minimum wage: we had to pay the rent for the house and the workshop, food, etc.”*.

Without mishaps so far, Juan Carlos and his family have prepared the trip carefully. *“We brought canned food such as sardines and sausages, peanuts, whey, water, two changes of clothes, tents, medicines, etc. We also brought some boots for the swamp, but we have not faced that issue yet”*, he explains.

The migrants talk about how, on this journey, they have two families: one by blood and the other by travel. *“Here we feel that we are all a family, we come to help each other, we all go to the same place”*, says Juan Carlos. During the exhaustion and hopelessness of many people, he sends a message of humanity. *“I am human, and I am not going to let anyone die. If I have something I will give it to you, I am not selfish. We bring a friend that he doesn't have, but I told him, ‘Let's go!’”*. It is the same illusion and certainty with which he faces the path. *“We are going to try to haggle for tickets to leave today. “We want to go as far as God will allow, which is to the United States”*.

The Darien region is a transboundary geographic area located on the border of Central America (Panama) and South America (Colombia). The region is approximately 400 kilometers long and is considered a biodiversity hotspot due to its strategic location as a biological bridge between the two continents. It covers the Darien National Park and the Los Katios Natural Park of Panama and Colombia, respectively.

The region is known for its dense tropical rainforest and is one of the largest areas of continuous rainforest on the continent. It is a remote and underdeveloped area with limited access to infrastructure and basic services, as its geographic characteristics and climatic conditions pose significant challenges to navigation and land movement. In addition, in the Darien region, at the border between Panama and Colombia, the Pan-American Route (a south-to-north highway system) that links almost all the countries of the American continent is cut off. Despite these access limitations, for years this region has become an irregular transit corridor for migrants of various nationalities bound for the United States.

The Colombian side of the Darien region is known as the "Serranía del Darien" in the north of the department of Chocó, and is made up of the municipalities of Acandí, Unguía, Riosucio, Carmen del Darien, Jurado, Bahía Solano and Nuquí. Given the phenomenon of mixed migratory flows, the municipality of Acandí is of greater importance in Colombia, given that its coastal and border location has made it the obligatory irregular crossing point for all persons in transit. In addition to Acandí, the municipalities of Necoclí, Turbo and Apartadó (Antioquia), although not bordering Panama, are also strategic areas of great relevance in the dynamics of migration in the region. These municipalities share socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, limited access to basic services and lack of infrastructure, a situation that increases the vulnerability of their populations.

Acandí belongs to the department of Chocó and is a coastal municipality on the Caribbean Sea that belongs to the Darien region. Its economy is based on ecological and recreational tourism, due to its beaches in the townships of Capurganá and Sapzurro. According to DANE, 51.4% of its population lives in poverty, which is evidenced by large gaps in access to basic services, vulnerabilities associated with unsatisfied basic needs of its populations and the neglect of state institutions⁵.

Meanwhile, the municipalities of Necoclí, Turbo and Apartadó belong to the Urabá subregion, in the department of Antioquia, and are close to the Darien region.



Necoclí is the municipality with the largest beach area in the country (96 km) and its traditional economic vocation is tourism. Despite this, Necoclí is a sixth category municipality, according to the budget categorization of municipalities in the country, which means that it has less budget and resources available to finance and provide public services, infrastructure, and social programs⁶. It is also the municipality with the highest percentage of the population living in poverty (62.7%) compared to Turbo (49.9%) and Apartadó (28%)⁷.

The municipality of Turbo concentrates its economy on activities such as fishing, agriculture, livestock, and commerce. Turbo is known for its important seaport which facilitates trade and the transport of goods both nationally and internationally. Finally, the municipality of Apartadó bases its economy on activities such as agriculture, livestock, fishing, commerce, and industry.

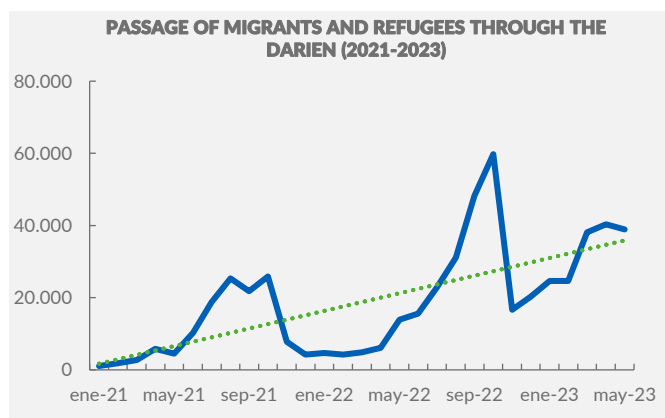
⁵ DANE (2022). Multidimensional poverty. National Population and Housing Census (CNVP).

⁶ General Accounting Office of the Nation. Government of Colombia. (2023). Categorization of Departments, districts and municipalities.

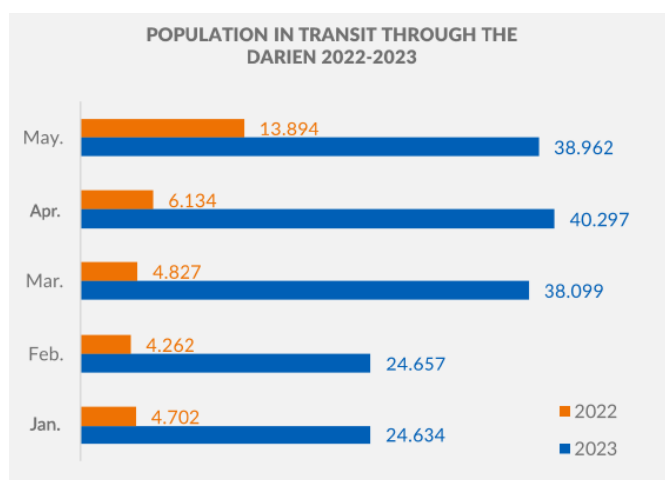
⁷ DANE (2022). Multidimensional poverty. National Population and Housing Census (CNVP).

It is recognized as an important center for the production and export of bananas and other agricultural products. According to official figures, Apartadó has high rates of informal labor, low educational attainment, educational backwardness, and limited access to potable water, particularly in the rural sector⁸.

In Colombia, the migration phenomenon in the Darien region extends to the four municipalities mentioned above (Acandí, Necoclí, Turbo and Apartadó) due to their land and maritime connections which become the connection with Central America through the Colombian-Panamanian border.



Source: SNM, National Migration Service of Panama



Source: SNM, National Migration Service of Panama

On the Colombian side, these municipalities are part of the migratory corridors and concentrate the movements of thousands of migrants in transit through the region.

According to official statistics from the SNM of Panama, in 2022 a total of 250,000 people made the crossing through the irregular passage through the Darien region, representing an increase of 87% (113,000) compared to 2021⁹. In 2023, the intensification of migratory flows through the Darien is on the rise. According to UNHCR, in the first 5 months of the year, 166,649 people entered

Panama irregularly through the Darien. In May alone, 38,962 people made this crossing.

The contrast of migratory flows between 2022 and 2023 shows a clear exponential growth in the period under study. In 2023, there was an increase of more than 20,000 people per month crossing the Colombia-Panama border. Regarding gender, it is estimated that 64% of the people who crossed the Darien between January and May 2023 were men, while 36% were women. Of these, 80% were adults and 20% were children, during the same period¹⁰. Among the nationalities of migrants on the Darien migration route are Venezuela, Ecuador, Haiti, Colombia, Cuba, African and South Asian countries. In 2022, the Venezuelan nationality presented the largest flow with about 150,327 people, a nationality that until three years ago was a minority on this route. In 2023, in the months between January and May, the nationality with the highest presence in the migratory route continues to be Venezuelan, with about 49.24% of the total number of people, followed by Haitians (18.90%), Ecuadorians (12.04%), Colombians (3.31%), Chinese (4.22%) and other nationalities (12.29%)¹¹.

On the other hand, migrants in transit through the migration corridors of the Darien are exposed to adverse situations and natural and security risks. The natural risks are associated with the characteristics of the transit through jungle areas, as well as with the maritime passage to be made. In terms of security, there are factors associated with the presence of NSAGs in the territory and with the strategic interest that these areas represent for illegal economies. The conflict dynamics in the Darien area are one of the factors that increase the vulnerability of the population in transit, where the dense vegetation and lack of infrastructure in the area make institutional presence difficult¹².

⁸ DANE (2022). Unsatisfied Basic Needs. National Population and Housing Census (CNVP).

⁹ IOM (2023). 2022 Report doubles the number of migrants on the dangerous Darien Jungle route.

¹⁰ IOM (2023). Official Data on Mixed Migratory Flows, Darien Province, Colombia - Panama Border.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ombudsman's Office of Colombia and Ombudsman's Office of Panama. (2022). Binational Early Warning N 001-2023 for Colombia and Panama.



The fluctuating dynamics of mixed migratory movements through the Darien region is directly related to the international political and legal context, especially with changes in the immigration policy of the United States. In April 2023, the United States government announced new actions to manage regional migration. Among these measures is the termination of Title 42 and the reinstatement of Title 8, effective May 11, 2023, which governs all immigration and asylum procedures, grants broad powers to both immigration agents and judges for immediate deportation, and seeks the opening of regional processing centers throughout the Western Hemisphere¹³. This situation increased the flow of migrants who were expected to arrive in North American territory prior to the implementation of the provision.

Specifically in the Colombian context, in April 2023, approaches were initiated between the GIFMM coordination, the Mayor's Office, the Foreign Ministry and UN agencies to coordinate the CAF (Border Service Center) in Necoclí, where, in cooperation between the Colombian State and international cooperation, assistance and attention will be provided to migrants and refugees. It is expected that the CAFs will allow for greater efficiency in the services provided to the population of interest, resulting in a greater and better response to the needs of people in transit¹⁴.

¹³ US Department of State. Office of the Spokesperson (2023). US Government announces sweeping new actions to manage regional migration.

¹⁴ HIAS (2023). Cross-Border Protection Monitoring: <https://hias.org/where/colombia/>

II. FINDINGS



“When I'm in the jungle, I hope to see dinosaurs from their dads, dinosaurs from their moms”

Yuliana Sofia

The dinosaurs of the Darien

Yuliana Sofia dreams of seeing dinosaurs and rhinos in the Darien jungle. The innocence of a 5-year-old girl protects her, without knowing it, from the dangers she will have to face with her mom and dad in the dense jungle, such as physical exhaustion from the long hikes, lack of water and fatigue from the steep ravines she must cross.

On a normal day, Yuliana would be at school learning to read, playing with her friends, and doing her homework before nightfall. She would have a house with a fan that would calm the stifling heat and she would always sleep in her bed. But in Turbo, her reality is far from normal. “I am not going to learn to read anymore, they did not teach me to read”, she says, since her parents had to take her out of school in the hope of having a more prosperous future in North America than the one, they had during these 5 years in Colombia. where Yuliana was born, after her parents left her country of origin, Venezuela.

Turbo is one of the starting points to enter the Darien jungle. Unlike Necoclí, a municipality located 46 km away, humanitarian assistance is mainly focused on offering legal advice on immigration procedures, so the most basic needs of the migrant population are not covered. Hundreds of migrants wait every day to complete the money to pay for a boat, the same one that Yuliana, along with her mother, father, siblings, and cousins, will ride towards Capurganá.

“I am excited to travel by boat because I see houses, a park, I see that they are selling ice cream”, she explains. When in the jungle, she hopes to see dinosaurs. “Dinosaurs of their daddies, dinosaurs of their mommies”, she says.

If Yuliana were smaller, her family could carry her in a cloth “baby carrier” so she would not have to walk. Although she does not carry suitcases, not having the proper clothing and footwear will make her journey even more difficult. In addition to the natural hazards, Yuliana is also at risk of diarrhea, dehydration due to lack of drinking water and respiratory illnesses.

“I do not like cold rice or cold mortadella. But sometimes I eat it cold”, she says. “I like peeled carrots, my mother has carrots, but they are ugly, that is why we left the house because the refrigerator is damaged”, she adds laughing. Most migrants will face the journey through the jungle with little food and very few water supplies.

The path Yuliana is about to take is the same one that more than 40,000 children and adolescents have taken in the first half of 2023, some of them unaccompanied, making it the year with the highest recorded transit. Since 2014, at least 315 migrants, including 43 children and adolescents, have died, or disappeared while crossing the Darien. Unaware of the harshness of the road ahead, Yuliana continues to dream of the dinosaurs she hopes to see.



The characteristics and vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien vary according to factors such as nationality, age, gender, and the availability of resources to face the journey and their interaction with local actors and communities that are part of the transit corridors. The following are the findings identified in the exploratory mission for both migrants and refugees and the impact of migration in the territories in relation to social, economic, and institutional conditions.

A. FINDINGS ON MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

THE MIGRATORY MOVEMENT THROUGH THE DARIEN REGION IS CHARACTERIZED BY DYNAMICS OF PAYMENTS AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

The Action Against Hunger field team showed that the migratory routes used by people in transit, through the Darien, must be understood as part of a much broader journey with border and transcontinental crossings. Migrants who arrive in the Darien region come from or transit through countries such as Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and other countries in South America, even from other continents such as Africa and Asia. In Colombia, to reach Darien, people must cross cities such as Bogotá, Montería, Medellín, Cucutá, Pasto, Maicao and La Guajira, to finally reach the subregion of Urabá Antioquia, from where the cross-border crossing from Colombia to Panama¹⁵ begins.

The migratory route through the Darien region begins in the municipalities of Necoclí and Turbo. Both municipalities have seaports that ensure river connections with nearby municipalities and with the north of the department of Chocó. From these municipalities, all people must travel by river to the municipality of Acanadí or the town of Capurganá (which belongs to Acanadí), from where they take the route through the Darien jungle to the Panamanian side of the border. Currently, Necoclí is the municipality that concentrates the greatest flow of people in transit. On the other hand, in the municipality of Turbo these flows are lower, but there are expectations among local actors, mainly transporters, that a greater flow will be activated due to the economic impact this could represent¹⁶. Based on the information gathered by our teams, it was identified that river transport costs range around COP 190,000 (US\$45) per person, regardless of age, who accesses Acanadí or Capurganá by river.

¹⁵ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with institutional actors, international organizations and migrant population in transit through the Darien region.

¹⁶ Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.



“Today we found out that from here (Turbo) is a little cheaper than Necoclí. We do not have money. We come from Venezuela and things are very difficult there. So we look for the most economical way”.

Migrant - Turbo

Once people arrive in Acandí or Capurganá, they are taken by the Community Action Board (JAC) to accommodation spaces known as “camps or shelters”, managed by the JAC itself. In the municipality of Acandí there are two “camps” in operation, one in the municipal seat and another in the rural area known as “Las Tecas”. For its part, in the town of Capurganá, there is a third camp where people who arrive directly to the town are taken. These camps are a mandatory step for all people trying to cross the Darien region.

Upon arriving at the camps each person must pay to gain access to the Darien route. The payment for access includes “guide service” and guarantees safety conditions during transit. The cost of access to Darien has an approximate value of COP 720,000 (175 dollars) per person, but this value may vary according to the characteristics of the route, depending on the associated risks, costs, and duration of the tour. Payment for boys and girls over two years of age is also mandatory. The signaling that the payment has already been made is done through the delivery of “handcuffs” or “distinctive bracelets” of different colors, which determine the type of accompaniment that each person will receive during the journey, as well as the benefits or treatments.

The routes used for the crossing vary depending on environmental, security factors or the same actors that control them. Currently, 3 routes have been identified to cross the border between Colombia and Panama¹⁷, although there is no officialization of these routes, according to the data of the people interviewed, they can be organized as:



Illustration based on information collected in interviews and focus groups.

¹⁷ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with international organizations and focus groups with migrants in transit through the Darien.



ROUTE 1

Turbo or Necoclí - Acandí - Las Tecas - Bajo Chiquito - ETRM Lajas Blancas

People begin the journey from Turbo or Necoclí, on a 2-hour journey, by river to Acandí and once they disembark, they are directed on a walking tour to the “camps” managed by the JAC, where payment or verification of the “handle” that ensures passage through the jungle. From this point the journey begins, which can last from 2 to 6 days, although for some people it can last even weeks, because of accidents and injuries during transit. The trip between one camp and another by motorcycle takes 20 minutes and walking can take 5 hours. From Las Tecas, the entrance through the Darien jungle begins through a mountainous stretch of 45 km walking until arriving at the border with Panama, at the Bajo Chiquito hamlet and border control point (Panama). From here they travel by river or on foot to the ETRM Lajas Blancas. People who arrive in Las Tecas in the afternoon must wait until the next day to start the tour.



ROUTE 2

Turbo or Necoclí - Capurgana - Bajo Chiquito - ETRM Lajas Blancas

This route is like the previous one, but this time people reach the town of Capurganá from where they begin the tour. Once in Capurganá, they are taken on foot to the “camp” managed by the JAC and there they pay is made for access to the route through the Darien. From the Capurganá camp they walk 15 km (approximately 2 hours on flat terrain and then mountainous terrain) to the La Casa del Abuelo camp. From this last point they advance on a new mountainous stretch walking to the Bajo Chiquito hamlet (Panama). From here they travel by river or on foot to the ETRM Lajas Blancas (Panama), this according to the most recent information. In total the journey can take from 2 to 6 days.



ROUTE 3

Turbo or Necoclí - Capurgana - Punta Carreto - Dos Bocas - Canaán Membrillo - ETRM San Vicente

From Necoclí, people travel by river to Capurganá and arrive at the JAC camp, where they pay or verify payment of the “manilla” that ensures access. From there, people take a new river route to the town of Punta Carreto (San Blas province, Panama). They then begin the journey by walking through mountainous terrain for 2 to 4 days to the indigenous Embera community of Canaán Membrillo on the border with Panama. From Canaán Membrillo they must take a boat and then a bus from the National Border Service of Panama to the ETRM of San Vicente. This last trip can take between 5 and 8 hours depending on the winter or drought seasons.

In any of the migratory routes, all migrants, once they arrive at the ETRM in Panama, are assisted by various international cooperation agencies. From these ETRMs they take the buses that transport them to Chiriquí (Panama), near the border with Costa Rica, to continue their transit through Central America. Many people have to stay several days, even weeks, in the ETRMs because they cannot afford to pay the cost of transportation to the Panama-Costa Rica border, which costs US\$40. Finally, to reach the United States, all migrants must pass through at least Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.



THE ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF PEOPLE IN TRANSIT DETERMINE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIGRATION ROUTE, THE EXPOSURE TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECURITY RISKS, AND PROMOTE A STRATIFIED MIGRATION

One of the elements identified in the dialogue with different actors and travel groups is that, depending on people's purchasing power, it is possible to take a "VIP route", which saves 8 hours of land travel and involves less physical effort. The route begins with a river journey in boats from Capurganá (Colombia) to Punta Carreto (Panama); from there people start the journey walking through the jungle for 2 to 4 days. They are accompanied by special "guides". This route involves the highest costs for access. The price can vary between 400 and 500 dollars. The profile of migrants with greater economic capacity at this point of the route has access to tourist services (hotels and restaurants) and boosts the economy of municipalities such as Turbo and Necoclí. The nationalities of this type of profile come mainly from countries such as China, India and some African countries. Migrants and refugees with less economic capacity access the other routes mentioned above, which have a longer duration, greater natural and protection risks, as well as greater physical effort¹⁸.



"Haitian migrants, Asians, Asians, Indians, Africans, other nationalities from Europe and Africa, even from the Middle East, bring a lot of resources; here the merchants love it when they see the Haitians, or see the Asians, or see the Indians; they bring a lot of money, and they consume a lot".

Focal point - Necoclí

Based on the information collected in the field, it was possible to identify how people in transit who do not have the money to pay for access and guide services cannot undertake the route through the Darien. This situation has caused people to be stuck inside the "camps" or shelters. In these cases, the time allowed to stay in the camps is a maximum of 10 days, during which time they must get the money. If after the allowed time the people do not get the money, they are sent back to Necoclí or in the worst case they are exposed to sexual exploitation and other illegal practices such as "hormiguelo" (carrying loads of illicit drugs on the stretch of the route to pay for the trip¹⁹).

The JAC also offers a "luggage loading" service from Capurganá and Acondí that costs between 20 and 30 dollars. The "baggage carriers" are locals who accompany the migrants' journey carrying their belongings to alleviate the weight. This is in addition to the payment they must make for the tour and is exclusively up to the limit of the Colombian border. Some guides who risk crossing the border charge between \$100 and \$200 for the rest of the way²⁰.

¹⁸ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with international organizations and focus groups with migrants in transit through the Darien.

¹⁹ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with international organizations and focus groups with migrants in transit through the Darien.

²⁰ Ibid.

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES WHO ARE LEFT WITHOUT ECONOMIC RESOURCES DURING TRANSIT END UP STAYING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS ON THE BEACHES OF NECOCLÍ AND TURBO (LIVING ON THE STREETS)

Through direct observation by the field team of Action Against Hunger in Necoclí and Turbo, there could be an identified phenomenon of a population in transit, mostly of Venezuelan nationality, which is informally and illegally settled on the beaches of the urban sector of the municipality.



“I planned to stay until Saturday, I had \$80,000 from my husband and I spent that because I thought we were going to go to the jungle”.

Migrant - Necoclí

Most of this population is made up of migrants who have no economic resources to continue the migratory route, that is, to pay for the boat ticket from Necoclí to Acandí or Capurganá, or to pay for the "manilla" that gives access to the route through the Darien, so they are stuck in Necoclí. These people present a high degree of vulnerability, since they do not have the resources to meet their basic needs, so we must consider them as homeless. In addition, the lack of economic resources means that these people must resort to negative coping strategies and present risks of abuse and exploitation²¹. According to the work collected in the focus groups and interviews with the migrant population, it was possible to identify a high level of ignorance on the part of this population about the physical risks of the routes, about the additional costs at the different stages and about the effects of the presence of Non-State Armed Groups. Although there is a general perception of the possible risks to be faced in transit, the migrant population is not fully aware of their dimensions and details. The main problems faced by this population are the lack of safe accommodation, the lack of places to relieve themselves and the limited access to food and hygiene products. During their stay in the informal settlements, migrants try to generate income to raise the money needed to pay for transportation and access to the Darien jungle²².



²¹ Ibid.

²² Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

According to the direct observation of our teams, groups settled on the beach in the municipalities of Necoclí and Turbo were identified, in precarious accommodation conditions that do not guarantee safety or dignity. Some people manage to camp in improvised spaces built by themselves, while others sleep in the open because they only have mats and plastic sheeting to protect them from the rain during the night. Among people living on the street, groups with special protection needs were identified, such as boys, girls, adolescents and young people, lactating women, pregnant women and the elderly, as well as people with physical or sensory disabilities²³. In 2023, very specific cases of people of other nationalities such as Ecuadorians, Chileans, and Haitians, also in informal settlement situations, have begun to become evident.



AMONG MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES THERE IS A GENERALIZED UNKNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS, ACCESS DIFFICULTIES, RISK FACTORS AND EXPENSES DURING THE ROUTE

Through interviews with key actors and focus groups with the migrant population, it was identified that there is a general lack of knowledge about the additional charges, payments and economic incentives that must be made at each of the points along the migratory route, such as the value of river transport from Necoclí or Turbo and the payment for access to the route through the Darien. They are also unaware of the minimum inputs and materials required to cross the jungle, given the exposure to natural hazards, protection risks, rugged geographical features, and extreme weather conditions. There is a lack of knowledge about the details of clothing, food supplies and the duration of the journey. Given this level of ignorance, it was also identified that people who access the "VIP route" to some extents do not need to fully understand all the factors associated with mobility to cross the Darien, given that they are permanently accompanied by guides and have access to food and drinking water along the way²⁴. Information about the details of the journey, in many cases, derives from social networks or from friends or family, as well as from other media such as cooperation organizations²⁵.

The lack of clarity about the dynamics of payments and economic incentives during the route is the main reason why many people delay or are unable to continue transiting through the Darien²⁶. There is a perception among people that it is a route where steps and charges can be negotiated (and that they will receive help) but they do not understand that it is a highly organized economic structure, where all types of action or attention are mediated by resources. economical. The lack of prior knowledge about costs has caused many people in transit to end up settling on the beach (in a street situation). It was identified that in some people the lack of information is due to the "deliberate" decision of

²³ Action Against Hunger (2023). Direct observation of Action Against Hunger field teams in the municipalities of Necoclí and Turbo.

²⁴ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with international organizations and focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

“not informing themselves about the risks” so as not to become demotivated on the route; their confidence is based on the criteria of success of other people who have crossed the jungle²⁷.



DURING TRANSIT, DIFFERENT "TRAVEL GROUPS" ARE FORMED THAT FUNCTION AS SUPPORT NETWORKS TO DEAL WITH THE RISKS AND THREATS ALONG THE WAY

The Action Against Hunger team identified that, during transit, migrants activate and organize "travel groups" that become support networks during their journeys. The figure of the travel groups is of high importance for coping with the risks and needs in the passage through the jungle. These groups are made up of many people who do not necessarily have ties of consanguinity or a relationship prior to the trip, but rather solidarity and reciprocity among them. These groups include migrants with high levels of exposure and vulnerability, such as children and adolescents who make the transit individually and require protection, as well as pregnant or breastfeeding women²⁸.



“We concluded that we must look for an average of 2 to 4 companions (...). Here we met, there comes a moment when one says: I am going to make the decision to travel with you because you are the person I need (...). We collaborate with each other. Come, I'll help you with your bag, put on this one that weighs less, (...) some sleep, others keep watch”.

Migrant - Necoclí

Individual transit also occurs and is most evident in young men who take the "VIP route" and correspond to nationalities such as Chinese, Indian, and African countries. However, there are people who make the journey alone because they are not taken in by any travel group, which increases their vulnerability on the route. The latter are mostly adolescents and young people.

On the other hand, the consolidation of travel groups is also related to family structures in transit. There are two types of families. The first is occupied by families in which both parents travel accompanied by their children. The presence of minors is a factor that generates greater challenges both in the displacement through areas of high difficulty in the jungle trekking and very steep places, as well as their exposure to health risks in the middle of these journeys. Secondly, there are families seeking reunification and where the main composition is made up of women and children seeking to reunite with a parent who is already in the destination country.

²⁷ Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

²⁸ Ibid.



STRATEGIES FOR GENERATING ECONOMIC INCOME TO CONTINUE THE MIGRATORY ROUTE THROUGH THE DARIEN REGION

People's economic resources condition their exposure to risk factors associated with the migratory route. Limited knowledge of the physical and economic requirements for crossing the Darien means that many people do not have the necessary money on hand during the journey, both for the maritime and other means of transportation, as well as for the payment to access the jungle route.



“From the moment you leave your house it is hard because you do not bring anything, just a bag of clothes is the only thing that accompanies you. We sold everything we had: the television, the refrigerator, everything. (...) The little we had was gone. (...) Whoever has a hammock, sleeps in a hammock, he who has nothing sleeps outdoors”.

Migrant - Necoclí

Many migrants carry out income-generating activities during transit. These vary considerably between contexts such as Turbo or Necoclí, where they enjoy greater mobility and access to different sectors to find some type of resource, and Acandí and Capurganá, where their ability to mobilize is limited by controls. In the Necoclí and Turbo cases, people carry out different activities to obtain resources, including manual labor, street sales or begging. In Acandí and Capurganá, given mobility limitations, a small percentage of people can carry out “social service”²⁹ actions for the JAC, in order to pay for access to the route or access food to support themselves and their families. In different testimonies collected, practices such as sexual exploitation to continue transit are reported.

²⁹ The very definition of “social service actions” has a different narrative on behalf of the different actors. For the JAC, this service represents the possibility of establishing an exchange of services for the costs of transit in a population that does not have the income to continue its trip. In the case of consulted migrants, these services are established arbitrarily and their development does not mean that final transit is obtained.



PROTECTION RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER AND AGE

From the perception of the migrant women who participated in the focus groups, a notable difference was identified between the migration of men and women. In most cases, during transit, women are the ones who carry children without any support³⁰. The risks of sexual violence that women encounter along the route are an aspect that is widespread among the migrant population and where the probability of such events occurring is so high that it has led women to develop strategies such as wearing men's clothing and traveling covered in arms and legs to go unnoticed. In many cases, mothers "mentally" prepare their daughters to understand jungle conditions and the risks associated with sexual violence they may face³¹.



"I do not hide things from her (my daughter) (the possibility of sexual violence in transit), I speak clearly to her".

Migrant mother

The dynamics of care throughout the journey also develop within the gender roles that are socially assigned. In the Acandí and Capurganá camps, the women who migrate with their families are the caregivers of the children, since the men oversee income generation or social service in the camp to access food. Women oversee preparing food, depending on the provisions available, generally in improvised ovens with firewood. They are also responsible for the physical and emotional care of children and adolescents. Women have an emotional burden of accumulation due to the previous situation to which they are exposed and the isolation and uncertainty in the journey. This situation has been clearly evidenced during the interviews and focus groups³².

³⁰Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

³¹Ibid.

³²Action Against Hunger (2023). Direct observation and focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.



B. FINDINGS ON THE TERRITORY

The municipalities focused on this study and that are part of the Darien migration route share certain characteristics regarding social, economic, and institutional vulnerability. Among the perceptions found among local actors are:

THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The most significant impact of migration in local contexts is on the previous economic vocations of the residents (fishing and tourism to some extent), giving way to a growth in the commercial supply of goods and services articulated with reception, care and transportation. of people in transit. The economic reconversion of the territories means that, from the narrative of the locals, the phenomenon of migration, at a general level, is not classified as negative, and is seen as a possibility of generating income during a series of obstacles that prevent the development of other productive initiatives, due to the limited investment resources in these municipalities³³.

An example of this are municipalities such as Acandí or Capurganá where migration is evident as a profitable business that has allowed more than 2,600 families from the two territories to be employed, as guides, transportation services, loading suitcases, motorcycle cars, among others. In the specific case of Capurganá, due to the high influx of migrants, the local people who provide the transportation service by means of motorcars have organized themselves into associations in such a way that they can have rotation for work. In Turbo, from the perception of the local actors consulted, there is a high interest in strengthening the passage of people in transit through the municipality due to the income it can represent for different economic sectors such as maritime transport³⁴.

Regarding the negative impacts, from the perception of the local actors consulted, the circulation of foreign currencies such as the American dollar has been evident, which generates an increase in the costs of basic products in the family basket for the local population, therefore account of inflation in the local economy. This increase therefore affects the availability and access of basic supplies, which results in the deterioration of the quality of life of a high percentage in the region³⁵. Despite this, the specific calculation of the economic dimension that the economy of migration can represent for these areas is complex, due to the same informality or illegality that is found in the process, as well as the segmentation that exists among migrants, routes, and prices. Furthermore, the flow of cash prevents the traceability of resources.

THE ROLE OF THE JAC IN THEIR OFFER OF MIGRATION GOODS AND SERVICES TO THE POPULATION IN TRANSIT THROUGH THE DARIEN

The migratory dynamics in the Darien region and its impact on the local economy have promoted the consolidation of economic activities developed by community-based organizations. An example of these activities is the administration

³³ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with international organizations and focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with local actors and focus groups and host communities in the Darien region.

of the camps located in Acandí and Capurganá, by the JAC of Capurganá. This administration consists of the management of access to the Darien jungle and the offer of an entire chain of goods and services that includes the transportation sector, accommodation, food, guide through the jungle and financial services (international transfers, where charges 10% of the total value of the transfer which must be greater than 200 dollars) ³⁶.



“I do not know if we are legal or illegal, they call me a coyote, but I am not a coyote. What I do know is that, if they come for one, they should take us all out”.

Community member

Camps have a private and for-profit connotation. Previously, these camps were managed by the Afro-descendant Community Councils, but the administration became the responsibility of the JAC of Capurganá, starting in February and March 2023. For this reason, the JACs play a leading role in the organization and local management of migratory flows. The administration of the camps and the sale of immigration service packages generate economic resources from informality that, according to the JAC narrative, end up being used in community reinvestments for improvement. By order of the GANE present in the territory, the JAC must carry out social works for the benefit of the inhabitants of the municipality. Between \$8,000 and \$10,000 COP is allocated per person in transit who pays for access services to Darien for social works. The works are agreed upon with the community according to the needs and problems.

THE PRESENCE OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS (GANE)

Different institutional actors point out the presence of GANE in the territory included in the Darien region, which have exercised a certain degree of control or influence over the migration economy. These groups can include guerrillas, paramilitaries, and criminal gangs, who take advantage of the vulnerability of people in transit and the limited effective state presence in the area³⁷. These GANEs have established influence in the regulation and control over migrants passing through the Darien Gap, whether by charging fees to allow them safe passage, offering protection against other criminal groups, or even organizing and facilitating the transportation of migrants in exchange for payments. or services. In some cases, these groups can impose their own "law" in the region, taxing or extorting migrants and local communities. It is important to highlight that the influence of these GANEs can increase the risks and violence faced by migrants, since they can exploit their vulnerability and subject them to abuse and extortion, in addition to the “use” of the most vulnerable population for trafficking activities. illicit use. The exercise of power, through the control of weapons and coercion, increases the vulnerability of the migrant population, which lacks mechanisms to enforce rights in these areas and subjects it to the control of the dominant group.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE OVERFLOW OF THE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE CAPACITY

At the budgetary level, the municipalities of Acandí, Capurganá, Necoclí and Turbo are in the sixth category, that is, they are in the lowest income level, which generates budgetary limitations and reduces the availability for social investment by the municipal administrations. Some of these places remain as areas not interconnected to electricity or with limited access to potable water, among others. In the municipality of Necoclí, the concentration of people in transit has overwhelmed the supply of basic services, which was already limited. In this context, there have been blockades by local authorities to improve access to basic services on the beaches or other areas where irregular settlements are set up by the migrant population.

³⁶ Action Against Hunger (2023). Focus groups with migrants and refugees in transit through the Darien.

³⁷ Action Against Hunger (2023). Interviews with local actors and focus groups and host communities in the Darien region.

III. RESPONSE TO THE MIGRATION CRISIS

A. INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE



“I have the time against me to get to the United States. I only have 4 months before my baby is born, but the bigger my belly gets the harder it will be to walk”

Yorgelis, pregnant migrant

The first times Yorgelis heard his brother talk about the possibility of emigrating from Venezuela to the United States, it seemed like a crazy idea. Although she had known friends and family who had migrated to other Latin American countries, she had never considered the possibility of going to a country where not only did she not speak the language, but she also had no support network.

However, Yorgelis discovered that she was pregnant and had to accept an overwhelming reality of finding herself without work, without support from the father of her child, without opportunities to get a job, or guarantee basic care during her pregnancy. It was at that moment that she made the decision to join her brother after what they call “the American dream”. *“I do not know how many medical tests I should have had, what I do know is that in my fifth month of pregnancy I am going to have my first ultrasound and until now I have started taking some vitamins so that my baby is well, thanks to a health brigade in which I participated”*, says Yorgelis.

The road has been long and challenging, the support they have received along the way has allowed them to reach the beach of Necoclí. *“We have to ask people for food, sometimes they help us, sometimes they do not, but that does not discourage us because we believe in a better future. Sleeping on the beach is uncomfortable, we are hungry and hot, there are mosquitoes and my hips hurt a lot, my feet swell and sometimes I go many hours without eating [...] the nausea is very strong, and I know that this hurts the baby”*.

Each one left their country with 150 dollars, but this money ran out, crossing the first of the 7 countries they hope to cross to reach the United States. For this reason, paying for a hotel is not an option, since, if you pay for the hotel, the wait will be longer to raise the money you need to pay for the boats, buses, and basic food to move forward.

“I have time against getting to the United States, I only have 4 months before my baby is born, but the bigger my belly is, the more difficult it will be to walk. I know that this is temporary, that everything will improve, the trip while pregnant is more difficult, but we are going to achieve our goal”.



According to the information collected by our teams, through interviews with local institutions, it was identified that, in the municipality of Necoclí, the mayor's office does not have sufficient resources to provide comprehensive care to the migrant population. For this reason, it articulates all response actions with the support of the GIFFM (Urabá satellite). Within this framework, it is currently focused on carrying out two specific actions:

- i) Construction of the CAF managed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Migration Management Board of the municipality, which is necessary to overcome the current obstacle of not having the supply of services concentrated in a single point.
- ii) Management with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Antioquia to declare Necoclí as a Special Border Zone, which would give the municipality institutional capacities to manage, among others, the most pressing current problems related to the situation of protection risks of unaccompanied children, adolescents and young people who travel to the Darien without any type of restriction from Necoclí.

Likewise, it was identified that the municipality of Apartadó also lacks sufficient resources for the attention of the migratory crisis, but of the 4 municipalities visited, it is the one that allocates more resources, thanks to the fact that the attention to the migrant population is included in the current development plan of the municipality and has its own line of action. It is the municipality that presents the greatest offer of services for all types of migrants and refugee population, also articulating in its entirety with the GIFFM, through the Apartadó Migration Desk and concentrating the entire offer of services in a single physical point corresponding to the PAO Apartadó, located in the Risk Management office of the Mayor's Office. The Secretariat of Social Inclusion is in charge of leading this response, which mainly includes the activation of care routes for cases where rights are guaranteed through advisory processes for the regularization and obtaining of PPT (Temporary Protection Permit), inclusion in SISBEN³⁸ and access to health services by the Mayor's Office routing towards the offer of the GIFFM or the Government of Antioquia, those cases of population not insured or served by the system. Said secretary carries out characterization and mapping of the location of the migrant population with a vocation for permanence and decentralized days in the urban and rural sectors, implementing communication strategies so that the population effectively accesses the offer as well as carrying out actions to strengthen the system with United Nations agencies on migrant rights.

³⁸ The System for Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programs (SISBEN) classifies the population according to their living conditions and income. This classification is used to focus social investment and ensure that it is allocated to those who need it most. The SISBEN allows the registration in its database of any person with a valid document and residing in private homes. The survey is not applied in special places of accommodation (LEA). Once the registration is made in the database, it generates the person's group, which is based on the living conditions and income of the home." DNP (2023) SISBEN.

B. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FROM INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The cooperation response to the current situation of mixed movements in the Gulf of Urabá is carried out at the regional and national level through the GIFMM, which has 20 members and 13 observer organizations. Two plenary sessions are held per month; one to address issues of mixed movements and another for issues of a vocation to permanence. Coordination avoids duplication of actions in the following components: **i)** monitoring of mixed movements on the ground; **ii)** delivery of information about risks on the route; **iii)** mapping of services at the national level and remote access through App; **vi)** intersectoral and interagency coordination to overcome gaps and needs according to the context of the transit points.

MAPPING OF HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS PRESENT IN THE TERRITORY	
ORGANIZATION	SERVICE OFFER
UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrant Assistance and Orientation Points (PAO): Necoclí, Apartadó, Turbo and Acandí. • Attention to protection and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse – PEAS. • Humanitarian return (not to cross the Darien). • Assistance with supplies for water purification. • Monitoring and management of cases for the population with a vocation to remain and in transit.
COLOMBIAN RED CROSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of general medicine services and delivery of medications. • Psychology and case referral service. • Protection of children through friendly spaces. • Restoration and family contact. • Connectivity services: telephone use, call reception, cell phone charging. • Guidance and information on the services offered, including the referral of cases to institutions such as the ICBF and the Hospital.
IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General medicine, dentistry, and psychology services coordinated with the Colombian Institute of Tropical Medicine and the Necoclí Hospital. • Nutritional care and vaccination services. • Prenatal check-up services, access to contraceptive methods, and family planning methods. • Attention to complex GBV protection cases. • Delivery of supplies for hygiene and sanitation. • Accompaniment to voluntary return.
HIAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health care. • Attention to cases of gender-based violence. • Cross-border Protection.
PROFAMILIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual and reproductive health care. • Support for voluntary interruption of pregnancy (IVE).
MERCY CORPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized health services only for the migrant population. Serves unaffiliated population.
OPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination and epidemiological control services.
IRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation and information with key messages about the route through Darien for the population in transit. • Food assistance.
NRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection attention. • Education in emergencies.
CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to cases of gender-based violence: Referral and derivation of cases. • Legal guidance and assistance.
UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Store (Delivery of scarves, sunscreen, repellent, wet wipes, water bottles, etc.) • Access to safe water through storage tanks on Necoclí beach. • Education in emergencies and child protection.
WORLD VISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of children through friendly spaces. • Accompaniment to unaccompanied boys and girls: Support for family reunification processes and referral of cases to the Family Police Station. • Lodging and food assistance services for people in transit who decide not to continue the trip through the Darien. • Case management and accompaniment to people in transit who decide not to continue the trip through the Darien.
ADRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEAS • Guidance focused on neutrality: do not encourage or discourage crossing; only inform so they can make informed decisions. • Raising awareness about United States legislation for migrants and legal implications if they arrive at the border. • Raising awareness about environmental risks on the route. • Humanitarian Transportation (not to cross). • Pedagogy for volunteers and host community.
APOYAR CAPACIDADES HUMANAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to prevent human trafficking and smuggling.
PMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of vouchers to access food for the population with a desire to remain.
CARITAS Y CARITAS ALEMANIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot food portions in Necoclí. Lunches are delivered on Monday and Friday.
PASTORAL SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 350 to 370 servings of hot food per day in Necoclí. Lunches are delivered on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.
SAMARITANIAN'S PURSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of hot food rations. Breakfast and dinner.



MIGRANT ATTENTION AND ORIENTATION POINTS (PAO)

The PAOs are Points of Assistance and Orientation for migrants financed by UNHCR. The PAOs of Turbo and Acandí concentrate the offer of cooperation services for the population with a desire to remain; however, due to the complex context of operation of the JAC camps in Acandí, an attempt is made to collect information on the population in transit and decentralized sessions are held for the population in transit on a sporadic basis. For their part, the PAOs of Necoclí and Apartadó concentrate service offerings for both the permanent population and the population in transit. Due to the high flow of migrants, the Necoclí PAO has the differential component of not only providing guidance, but also has a line of action for monitoring and managing cases for populations in transit and with a vocation to remain focused mainly on children, girls, adolescents, and young people, through the GIFMM file. Additionally, they have two additional lines of action corresponding to institutional strengthening and community strengthening.

CONCLUSIONS



“Dad, look how strong I am. I have to go with you because I speak all those languages better than you, so you need me”

Louis

Everyday hundreds of people seek to cross the Darien jungle, coming from various contexts and countries, but for the majority there is a common denominator: the lack of opportunities. Evens was born in Haiti, considered the poorest country in America, where he lived his childhood and youth. It was also there where his son Louis was born, who became his adventure companion, which began when his baby was only 6 months old.

“When Louis was born, we had a crisis, we had no money, so I decided to leave. My son is Haitian, but he is also Chilean, because since he was a baby, I came with him to Santiago de Chile”. Louis spent much of his time in kindergarten, where he not only learned to speak Spanish fluently, but also developed great creativity. His father picked him up every afternoon after long days of work, in which he was always striving to earn some extra income.

Over time, his situation stabilized in Chile and Louis demonstrated an extraordinary talent for languages, speaking Spanish, English, French and Haitian Creole, his native language. During his stay in Chile, they had some good and some challenging times. Louis had opportunities to earn some money, but he also faced discrimination and was unable to regularize his immigration status. *“Dad, look how strong I am. I must accompany you because I speak all those languages better than you, so you need me”, Louis says with pride and determination.*

“On the way to the United States I have seen many Haitians, we have to help each other, we have a good physical level to cross the Darien, but we know that it will not be easy, tonight we sleep in the camp and tomorrow we leave at 6:00 am, We carried water, rice, tuna, a tent and our things in two suitcases, we sold everything else, we have the savings and we are going to get to the United States, we will not return to Haiti”, says Evens.



ON THE MAIN HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IDENTIFIED

- **Economic income**

In Necoclí, the population with the greatest needs is those settled on the beach (on the streets) who stay on the beaches for between 2 to 6 months in unsafe accommodation conditions and in conditions of vulnerability. This phenomenon is evident in the mostly Venezuelan migrant population settled informally. This population has been dammed at this point because it does not have the resources to purchase the river transport ticket to Acaandí, nor to pay the access fees to the route through the Darien. Their main need is the generation of economic income to continue the migratory route. They also have pressing needs for shelter, food, access to water supplies and health services.

The main gaps of the population with a vocation to permanence are related to the lack of opportunities for income-generating projects due to unemployment and obstacles to obtaining seed capital for entrepreneurship. In Necoclí and Apartadó, this population is characterized by having overcome its conditions of vulnerability in education, health and, for the most part, regularization; unlike the migrant population in the municipality of Acaandí, which still does not have access to health, drinking water and electricity in continuous conditions. For its part, in Apartadó the largest number of populations with a vocation to remain is concentrated even with needs for food assistance.

- **Accommodations and settlements**

The homeless population (settled on the beach) in Necoclí needs shelters for longer periods of time since they do not have the resources to afford a hotel or a rental. At the same time, it needs sanitary services and kitchens or spaces to prepare food.

The Acaandí and Capurganá camps do not meet the needs of the population in transit and do not have specifications for adequate humanitarian assistance. They lack appropriate places to sleep, they only have plastic chairs, hammocks in open spaces and without enclosure. They do not have hydration points (access to safe water), kitchens or spaces to prepare food, the sanitary spaces do not have doors nor are they differentiated for men and women with appropriate signage that guarantees safety and privacy. They do not have continuous public drinking water service or continuous electricity service.

The homeless population (settled on the beach) and the population in the camps require elements such as waterproof tents, mosquito nets, travel backpacks, scarves to carry children, thermoses with water filters, hammocks, creolin and elements to prepare food among others, to be able to rest and eat during the entire migratory route (including the Darien crossing section).

- **Water, sanitation and hygiene**

Water: The main need of the population in transit is limited access to water suitable for consumption during the journey through the Darien because they lack the money to buy it, as well as the vital capacity to carry it (especially when crossing the jungle). The camps do not have access to safe water. People get water from the river or from sanitary systems that are supplied by the municipal supply, but neither has treatment. It has been shown that the use of water purification pills or tablets has a drawback because the people who use them do not usually wait the necessary time for the product to have its effect on the collected water, especially when they are on the move.

Sanitation: Although the Acandí camp has electricity and water service from the municipal aqueduct, the supply of both services is not constant. There are recurring interruptions that affect the supply of the camps. It was also identified that the health conditions of the health units are deficient. In the case of the homeless population (settled on the beach), the most pressing need lies in the limited availability of sanitary systems for sanitation. They only have 3 bathrooms in one of the seaports, but these remain in extremely unsanitary conditions. In the camps, some bathrooms do not have access to water, they have bad odors, and the cleanliness and sanitation conditions are poor.

Hygiene: The population in transit needs hygiene items because in some cases they have exhausted supplies, due to the changes and dynamics during the migratory route or due to the lack of economic income to access basic hygiene items. Women and girls use river water for personal hygiene; however, practical items are required that guarantee access to safe water and hygiene without representing an additional burden during the journey.



- **Food security**

People in transit, as well as those staying in the informal settlements in Necoclí, require food assistance, due to the depletion of food supplies intended for the crossing of the Darien, due to the prolongation of times during the journeys and the lack of economic resources to access food. According to what was stated in the interviews and focus groups, during the tours and during the time spent in the camps, people usually resort to strategies to cope with the lack of food such as: prioritizing the feeding of children, reducing the portions and the number of intakes in the diet of adults and adolescents, and asking for gifted or borrowed food (on credit).

In general, adults and adolescents consume 1 meal a day, which can be a single food that they had reserved for the journey or food that they collected in the environment. The migrant population that is currently in the Capurganá and Acandí camps (municipality where most of the population has already exhausted their resources) assures that, due to the lack of economic resources, their diet has deteriorated significantly and considers that this has affected to children and adolescents who are underweight. Currently, the daily diet lacks protein (meat, chicken, eggs) or vegetable protein, the minimum required for caloric requirements during the jungle crossing. For their part, migrants settled on the beaches of Necoclí require immediate food assistance, given that they do not have the economic resources to access food.

- **Health and nutrition**

According to the information collected, as well as direct observation of the conditions of the migrant population, it was possible to identify that boys and girls are more exposed to conditions associated with diarrheal diseases, nausea, vomiting and skin conditions, for example. account of insect bites, consumption of water from the river and poor hygiene conditions. Additionally, health risks are significantly increased due to travel conditions. Given the long journeys (some from Venezuela or Ecuador without interruption to Acandí) and the climatic conditions with high temperatures, high humidity and high rainfall, the migrant population is exposed to extreme physical demands. If the people who make the journey do not have adequate physical conditioning, they are exposed to the risk of suffering health problems at different times during the journey.

The main health problems reported by women in transit are associated with mental health and maternal and child health for pregnant and lactating mothers. Added to this are factors such as lack of economic resources, lack of food and the dynamics of caring for the family nucleus that generate emotional burdens and a greater sense of stress. Taking these elements into account, the guarantee of control and follow-up care for pregnant and lactating women who are affected in their control cycles because during the migratory route is required as a priority and urgently.

- **Gender and protection**

Migrant women need protection measures from gender-based violence related to intimate partner violence, interpersonal violence, violence from external actors and risks of sexual exploitation, especially for girls, boys, adolescents, young people, and women in transit through the Darien. In the municipality of Necoclí it is necessary to strengthen the care route for this violence to prevent them and give them timely and priority attention when they have occurred. Although in Necoclí there is humanitarian assistance in the protection sector (gender-based violence and psychosocial support), in other municipalities there is no broad coverage to prevent the exposure of women, girls, boys and adolescents to this risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS



“He who wants to continue achieves success. There are obstacles, but if he backs down, he will achieve nothing. If he is going to leave, let him move on, let him achieve his purpose”

Josue

It was a few weeks ago that Josue made one of the most difficult decisions of his life to leave his family in Ecuador and begin his migration to the United States. *“I lived hand to mouth, struggling to put food on the table”*, he remembers. His journey began crossing the department of Nariño (Colombia) and after more than 26 days of travel that involved long walks and mule trips, Josue finally arrived in Necoclí, where he is preparing to cross the Darien Jungle.

Every day, hundreds of migrants enter through the more than forty irregular points along the border between Ecuador and Colombia, with the department of Nariño being one of the departments that receives the most migrants. Ecuadorians are one of the nationalities that crosses the Darien the most.

Josue's feet touch the sand on the beach as his mind links the roads he studied and knows he must travel to reach Mexico, the final frontier. *“My goal is to get to the United States. I started researching myself and I am informed. I am alone, but once I take a step forward, I will not go back”*, says Josue as he waits for the boat with which he will cross the Gulf of Urabá to reach the entry point of the Darien Gap.

Before the pandemic, Josue had a stable job as a worker, but companies began to hire people who were willing to work for lower salaries and without enrolling them in Social Security, so he had to work twice as hard to have the same income. He had to get two jobs, but even so the resources were scarce, and the economy was not enough for him to survive.

“My daughter was constantly asking me for things I could not give her”, he explains. Life became more difficult. The day he did not have the money to make the monthly payment for his health was when he made the decision to leave his country and embark on this challenging journey with the dream of guaranteeing a dignified life for his family.

He has saved money to be able to pay for the next part of the journey and is convinced that with effort it can be achieved. *“He who wants to continue achieves success. There are obstacles, but if he backs down, he will achieve nothing. If he is going to leave, let him move on, let him achieve his purpose”*, he says.

Josue is aware of the possibility that he may not be able to reach the United States, but he relies on his confidence to not give up. *“You should not say ‘I will not be able to’, because then, you will not achieve anything. God squeezes, but he does not hang. If you have faith, everything happens, faith moves mountains”*, he agrees.

About to leave for Panama, he acknowledges that the journey ahead will not be easy. *“I did not expect it, but you have to accept reality. You must be risky to go into the jungle, but I am not afraid”*. On the other side, the Darien jungle awaits other compatriots like him to begin their journey. His feet will be the ones that set the pace.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SHORT TERM

- The need to **ensure the conditions of “humanitarian access”** to the camps in the municipality of Acaandí and the township of Capurganá is evident, to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches directly to the people affected by the crisis that the Darien jungle is going through. This implies negotiating humanitarian access with the armed actors present and other entities that have control and influence over the concentration points of migrants and refugees.
- **Continuous attention is required for people settled informally (street situation) on the beaches** of Necoclí with the aim of reducing protection risks, prevalence of diseases associated with the consumption of unsuitable water, conditions of food insecurity, etc. It is recommended that such attention be carried out in coordination with local authorities and United Nations agencies, also seeking a greater understanding of the phenomenon, the needs and vulnerabilities of the migrant population, which continues to grow larger every day in terms of people.
- **Immediate, priority and constant attention is required in maternal and child health** to assess boys and girls mainly under 5 years of age, but also older, as well as pregnant and lactating women, since the vulnerabilities of these groups are particularly high. and the direct risks to their health conditions.
- It is necessary to **respond in a more precise and orderly manner regarding the supply of drinking water and sanitation and hygiene spaces** with guarantees of protection and division for women, boys, and girls (separate spaces). Regarding access to water, the provision of hydration points is recommended where migrants can stock up on safe water before and during the journey through the jungle.
- It is necessary to **amplify the cross-border response with care, prevention, and control mechanisms upon departure in Colombia and upon arrival at border points in Panama**, especially for population groups with greater vulnerabilities, which are women, pregnant and lactating women, and children. and girls under 5 years old. This action, centered on people, is of high importance to save lives.
- Influence and **work hand in hand with the institutions** (Colombian Migration, Government, and departmental and municipal administrations) **in the establishment of the CAF** to centralize the offer of services for migrants and refugees, in order to improve conditions during the migratory route.
- **Constantly adapt humanitarian actions in the Darien, according to the climate variability** associated with factors such as the El Niño phenomenon, annual precipitation cycles and the occurrence of emergencies due to natural disasters.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE MEDIUM TERM

- The host population in the municipalities of Necoclí and Acaandí feels in a certain way “benefited” by the economic income derived from the provision of services on the migratory route. However, there is a feeling of fear due to increases in the costs of living and prices of basic products in the family basket. There is also a “perception” and fear about the risk of increased violence during the immigration season.
- Develop income generation programs (employability and entrepreneurship) for the migrant population with a vocation for “temporary” permanence settled in Apartadó, Turbo and Necoclí to reduce the risks of negative coping in the search for economic resources for the passage of border.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I:

INSTRUMENT	REGIONS AND GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS PRIORITIZED	
	URABÁ ANTIOQUEÑO	NORTE DE CHOCÓ
<p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Total: 9</p>	<p>Necoclí</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview with the migrant liaison of the Risk Management office of the Mayor's Office of Necoclí. 2. Interview with UNICEF. 3. Interview with the PAO. <p>Apartadó</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Interview with the Social Inclusion Secretariat of the Mayor's Office of Apartadó. 5. Interview with Venezuelan leaders of the migrant population with a vocation to remain. <p>Turbo</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Interview with the manager of the river port of the municipality of Turbo. 	<p>Capurganá</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Interview with the Red Cross in the Capurganá camp. 8. Interview with spokesperson for the Capurganá JAC Community Action Board, spokesperson for the administration of the camps in Acandí and Capurganá. <p>Acandí</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Continuation of interview with spokesperson for the JAC of Capurganá JAC.
<p>Focal groups</p> <p>Total: 7</p>	<p>Necoclí</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus group with women with a desire to remain in the Child Development Center (CDI). 2. Focus group with women with a population in transit settled on the beach. 3. Focus groups with men with a transit population settled on the beach. <p>Turbo</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Mixed focus group with population in transit. 	<p>Capurganá</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mixed focus group with population in transit in the camp. <p>Acandí</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Mixed focus group with transit population in the camp. 7. Mixed focus group with population with a vocation to permanence, held in the Mayor's Office of Acandí.
<p>Interlocution spaces with the humanitarian sector</p> <p>Total: 3</p>	<p>Necoclí</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tour of the humanitarian care offer in the Necoclí beach area and presentation of the current migration situation by the Manager of the GIFMM Urabá and two officials from the Government of Antioquia. 2. Participation in the GIFMM Urabá plenary session. 3. Mapping of cooperation actors in the beach area. 	
<p>Life stories</p> <p>Total: 12</p>	<p>Necoclí</p> <p>Six life stories of the migrant population.</p> <p>Turbo</p> <p>Three life stories of the migrant population.</p>	<p>Capurganá</p> <p>Two life stories of the migrant population.</p> <p>Acandí</p> <p>One life storie of the migrant population.</p>



DARIEN: Situation of mixed migratory flows

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