

HIGHLIGHTS



2.522
Migrants sheltered
at the MRS



215%
Overcapacity in
Stations nationwide



85
Pregnant women



27%
Children and
adolescents
under 17



4
Unaccompanied
children and
adolescents
under 17



1
Migrant station enabled for
treatment of COVID-19 patients



20
Cases of COVID19 have been identified
by community transmission in Darien



No reported arrivals of migrants
in Bajo Chiquito since March 29, 2020



Transit population is not ruled out
through the Darien National Park

METHODOLOGY

The information in this report is collected by IOM Panama staff in Darién and Chiriquí, through field monitoring, multi-sectoral assessments through key informants, as well as regular information exchange at the technical level, and at the central level of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Human Mobility.

CONTEXT OF THE SITUATION

The Darien region has been characterized as one of the most important points of transit for extra-regional migrants for the past eleven years. However, the Darien region is characterized as one of the most challenging for Panama's socio-economic development; a situation that increases the complexity of dealing with massive and irregular migration flows.

Since 2009, significant extra-regional migration flows have been identified, that is, migrants from other continents, such as Africa, Asia and the Caribbean region, specifically Haitians and Cubans.

In 2016, the first migration crisis from extra-regionals occurred in the Darien region, strongly impacted by the closing of borders in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Faced with all this mobility, the governments of Panama and Costa Rica established a binational agreement that would guarantee the orderly, regular and safe transit of these migrants through the territory.

In addition to these facts, on March 11th 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a state of pandemic for the COVID19 virus, which is why global sanitary measures were established in

order to mitigate the contagion. Central America, responded by shutting its borders or by modifying its border management policies, as well as launching massive hygiene campaigns.

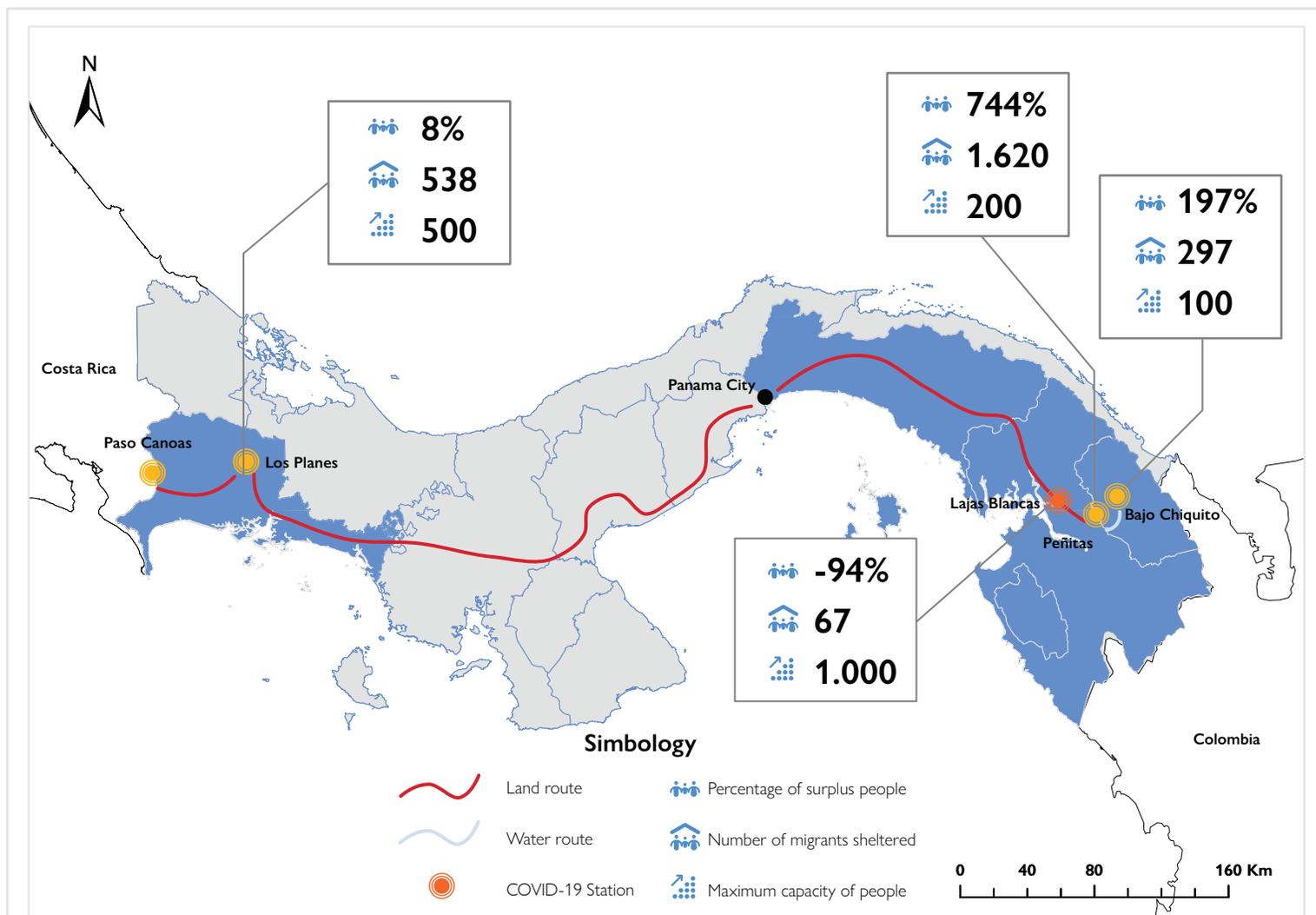
The application of these measures implied changes in the mobility of migrants transiting through Panama.

The Government of Panama decreed a state of emergency as of March 12, 2020, as a result of related measures that have been taken, many operations have been affected, particularly Operation Controlled Flow. For its part, the Government of Costa Rica declared a state of national emergency throughout its territory as of 16 March 2020. As a result, the border between Panama and Costa Rica is presumed to be closed for at least another month, due to the health regulations of the Government of Costa Rica. So far there are at least 1,900 migrants stranded in the province of Darien, mostly in La Peñita Migrant Reception Station (MRS), the community of Bajo Chiquito, and 500 in MRS Los Planes in the province of Chiriqui.

Since March 24 the country has been under mandatory quarantine. Basic service provision and main government systems are overall operational. Circulation has been restricted during the day, according to gender, daily hours, the last number of the identity card (foreigners use their passport number). In addition, the government announced the provision of food commodity exchanges and the subsequent distribution of a solidarity bond within the Panama Solidarity Plan. Regularized migrants, who carry identity cards will be beneficiaries of the Plan (more information at www.panamasolidario.gob.pa). As of April 16, Panama has 4,016 confirmed cases and a total of 109 deaths. Between April 14 and April 15, and as a result of the rapid increase in cases (over 100) at the provincial level, an epidemiological fence was declared in the province of Darien.

At the time of this report, COVID-19 has spread by community transmission in the MRS La Peñita in Darien. Twenty COVID-19 positive cases were confirmed and 46 suspected cases were segregated in La Peñita and moved to the MRS located in Lajas Blancas to receive assistance. As of 16 April, 115 cases have been reported in the province of Darien, including officials of the National Border Service (SENAFRONT for its acronym in Spanish) and the National Migration Service (NMS), migrants and members of the host communities. As a result of this situation, there has been a decline in the field presence of units for border control and protection and key staff and partners who provide humanitarian assistance.

POPULATION SHELTERED AT MIGRANT RECEIVING STATIONS



Basemap source: ESRI and UN World Map

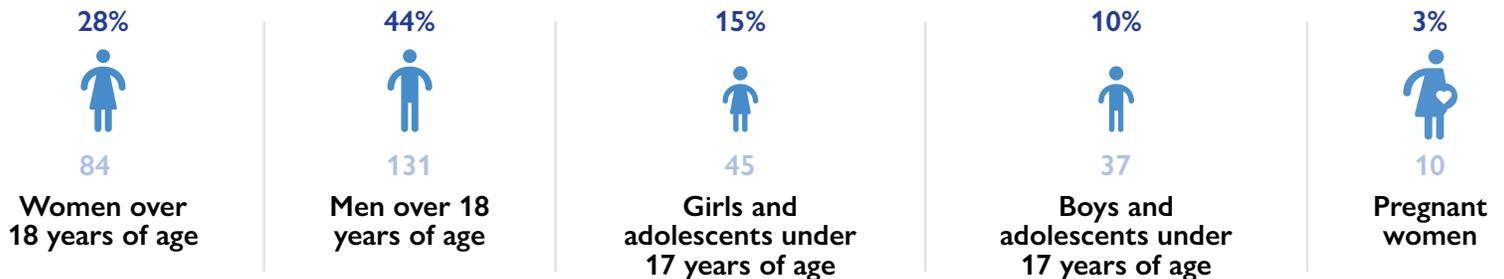
This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

STATISTICS OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION SHELTERED IN THE COMMUNITY OF BAJO CHIQUITO

16 APRIL 2020



297
 Sheltered migrants



HIGHLIGHTED NATIONALITIES



92%

Haiti

272



4%

Democratic Republic of Congo

12



3%

Cuba

8

The remaining 1% corresponds to 4 different nationalities from various countries in Africa and South America.

COVID19 CASE STATISTICS



0

No cases of COVID19 have been identified in Bajo Chiquito



16 tests applied

To staff and migrants



100%

Negative results

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE COMMUNITY OF BAJO CHIQUITO

WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION (WASH)



Implemented actions

- The Federation of the Red Cross, installed a water station.

Identified needs

- Promote and establish a sanitation or hygiene system.

- Develop and print informational materials about COVID-19. Including recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO), and national guidelines on hand washing, hygiene practices and symptom-identification campaigns from the Ministry of Health (MINSA for its acronym in Spanish). Materials should be in the main languages spoken at shelters and distributed among the MRS migrant population and host communities regarding the COVID19 outbreak, World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations and Ministry of Health (MINSA for its acronym in Spanish) national guidelines on hand washing and hygiene practices and symptom-identification campaigns.

- Support an adequate socialization of guidelines and routes of medical attention as set by MINSA before the COVID-19 outbreak, with the engagement of MRS staff, the host community, UN organizations and civil society.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION



Implemented Actions

- SENAFRONT is providing food for migrant consumption.

Identified needs

- There is no adequate shelter infrastructure for migrants.

HEALTH



Identified needs

- It is not considered an area of responsibility by MINSA, so health services are scarce.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT



Implemented Actions

- IOM has donated gallons of chlorine, disinfectants and masks.

Identified needs

- There is no adequate infrastructure for the shelter of migrants.

PROTECTION



Implemented Actions

- SENAFRONT maintains 5 units that protects the migrant community.

Identified needs

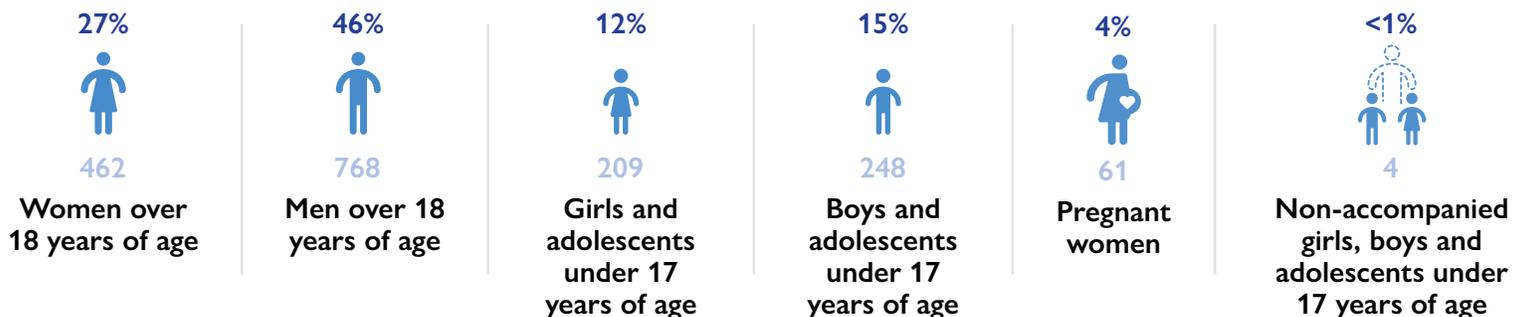
- Lack of institutions responsible for channeling specific cases that require protection within the vulnerable population.

STATISTICS OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION SHELTERED AT MRS LA PEÑITA

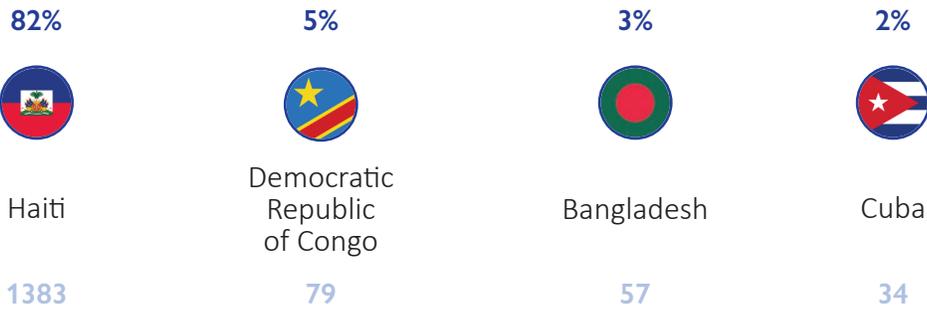
1 APRIL 2020



1.687
Sheltered migrants

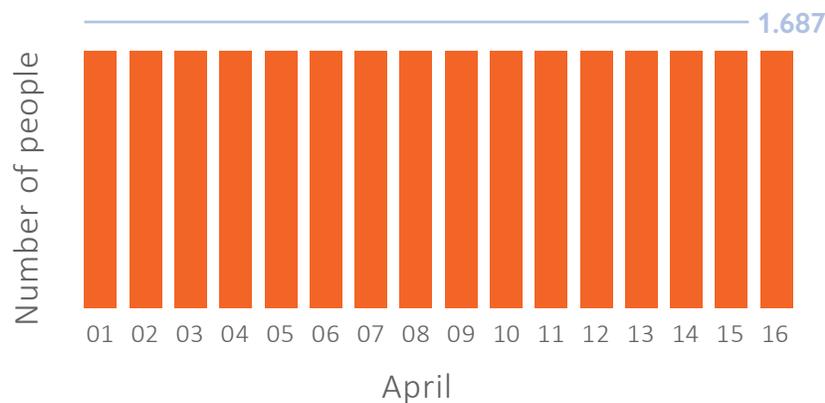


HIGHLIGHTED NATIONALITIES



The remaining 8% corresponds to 33 different nationalities from various countries in Africa and South Asia.

NUMBER OF MIGRANTS SHELTERED AT MRS LA PEÑITA, APRIL 2020



SERVICES PROVIDED AND AVAILABLE AT MRS LA PEÑITA DURING THE PANDEMIC
 COMPARED TO MINIMUM HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS



STATISTICS ON COVID19 CASES

 **20**
 cases spread by community
 transmission in Darién

 **40**
 suspected cases spread by
 community transmission in Darién

These people have moved to MRS Lajas Blancas, which has been temporarily authorized to care for COVID-19 positive migrants in Darién, as part of the health care protocol that is implemented in Panama.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AT MRS LA PEÑITA

WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION (WASH)



Implemented Actions

- In response to the emergency, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) increased the capacity from 15.000 litres of water per day to 30.000 litres per day.
- The National Migration Service (NMS) has installed a water tank to provide an additional water reserve in case the current system fails and is unable to provide safe potable water.
- Migrants currently support with the cleaning chores, due to compensate for shortage of cleaning staff.
- IOM has donated 10 boxes of paper towels and 960.16oz bottles of alcohol. In conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2.300 masks have been donated and the Apostolic Vicariate of Darien has donated 50 gallons of disinfectant soap.
- MINSAs and Red Cross staff are holding talks on the need for hygiene guidelines in different languages.

Identified needs

- Constant water system monitoring system
- Increased cleaning frequency of latrines; currently scheduled at two days per week.
- Lack of personal hygiene kits.
- Development and printing of informational materials in the predominant languages spoken in the accommodations and handed out to the MRS migrant population and host communities regarding the COVID19 outbreak, WHO recommendations and MINSAs national guidelines on hand washing and hygiene practices and symptom-identification campaigns.
- Install hand-washing stations; provided at minimum standard of 1 in 10 inhabitants per accommodation, in accordance with Sphere Standard N 6.3 "WASH in health facilities" in order to increase prevention measures.
- Support an adequate socialization of guidelines and routes of medical attention as set by MINSAs before the COVID19 outbreak, with the engagement of MRS staff, the host community, UN organizations and civil society.
- Increase mosquitoes-spraying frequencies.

FOOD SECURITY



Implemented Actions

- The Red Cross and UNICEF implemented a food distribution system consisting of numbered meal cards for each migrant, along with a list of migrants per accommodation in order to simplify the feeding process and ensure that everyone actually receives the corresponding food portions.
- IOM has managed to secure meal support in collaboration with the Apostolic Vicariate of Darien, specifically the Mission of the Sisters of Mariknoll. Deliveries of rice, beans, chicken meat, baby formula and sugar have been made.
- Migrants are helping with meal preparations and distribution due to the withdrawal of non-governmental organizations and other agencies that were collaborating with this process.

Identified needs

- Food is distributed only once a day.
- Support is required to provide sufficient food to cover all migrants currently located at the MRS. Dietary needs must be considered contemplating the minimum quantity of nutrients required per person, and meal frequency must be increased to 3 times a day.
- There are no specific dietary requirements established for children under 5 years old, chronically ill people or pregnant women.
- Cases of children suffering from dehydration have been identified. Baby formula is only provided every two weeks and is insufficient to cover all children at the shelter.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT



Implemented Actions

- IOM shared provisions of the WHO and the Camp Coordination and Maintenance Cluster (CCCM) with SENAFRONT and the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC), on the needs for infrastructure development, shelters and the water, sanitation and hygiene sector in the face of COVID-19.

- UNICEF has made donations of pressure mats from migrants.

Identified needs

- Acquisition and installation of two multipurpose tents (one at MRS Lajas Blancas and the other at La Peñita), with capacity for up to 12 people, intended to isolate individuals that present symptoms similar to COVID-19.

- Support for the adaptation of the infrastructure of the MRS La Peñita. There are no individual housing units.

- The capacity limit of MRS La Peñita has been exceeded. People do not have enough space between them to maintain social distance and they also do not have spaces to isolate possible cases of COVID-19.

- Provision of improvised emergency shelters by COVID-19 in MRS La Peñita, in order to provide an immediate and short-term emergency response.

- Installation of solar panels in distant locations and those near the latrines, since currently there is little or no lighting in these sectors.

- Lack of facilities suitable for food handling and cooking

- Solid waste management service is suspended due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the measures taken to prevent spread.

HEALTH



Implemented Actions

- Health measures have been reinforced and the station staff was increased with two doctors and three nurses, following the positive COVID19 cases identified at the station. This is led by MINSa.

- MINSa, SENAFRONT and the Mayor's Office of Pinogana established an epidemiological fence around the perimeter of the community of La Peñita.

- MINSa has strengthened its staff by hiring new positions for emergency care in Darién.

Transfers to hospitals and primary care centres are being carried out in coordination between MINSa and SENAFRONT. Two ambulances are available, shared with the MRS Lajas Blancas and air transport through the Naval Air Service, from the community of San Vicente.

Identified needs

- Cleaning items for waste management.

- There is no access to contraceptive methods such as condoms.

- Support for supply and provision of hygiene kits while the national state of emergency for COVID-19 is maintained.

- There are reports of migrants with illnesses associated with diarrhea, vomiting, fever and dehydration, especially in children and pregnant women.

- There is a lack of information among migrants regarding access to health services, especially when there are cases of family members requiring hospitalization.

- MINSa does not have the capacity to deal with the pandemic in Darién, mainly because the current infrastructure focuses on primary care.

PROTECTION



Implemented Actions

- SENAFRONT currently maintains 14 units for a migrant population of over a thousand people. These units provide security, order, logistical support and support to the NMS during the registration process upon arrival of migrants from Bajo Chiquito.

Identified needs

- Migrants have initiated protests demanding access to drinking water, food, decent infrastructure and non-discrimination. Incidents of violence have occurred among migrants due to desperation and stress in which they find themselves.

- Xenophobic actions have been generated by the local population of La Peñita and they have demanded the removal of the migrant population from the place. Attempts have been made by migrants to flee the station.

- Migrants have spent their economic resources during their stay in La Peñita and many do not have money left to continue their journey.

- The National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family will not be making any arrangements for unaccompanied migrant children.

- Support the development of protocols, as well as the registration of the migrant population in the MRS La Peñita to identify vulnerable and high-risk profiles, to facilitate monitoring and health conditions in prevention to COVID-19.

- All specific actions in need of protection and assistance have been suspended, due to the health provisions for the outbreak of COVID-19 at the Station.

STATISTICS OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION SHELTERED IN THE MRS LAJAS BLANCAS

16 APRIL, 2020



67
Sheltered migrants



47
suspicious cases by community transmission in Darien



20
cases identified by community transmission in Darién



2
persons transferred to Panama City, for hospital care due to respiratory insufficiency

No official data are available on the breakdown by sex, age and nationality.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN MRS LAJAS BLANCAS

The MRS Lajas Blancas is a planned camp with a capacity for 1,000 people, and is a relatively new facility that is not yet complete. It was opened due to the need to relocate COVID-19 infected migrants to the community of La Peñita.

WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION (WASH)



Implemented actions

- It has two water purification machines, operated by solar panels.

Identified needs

- The living spaces are not complete, there are 75 living unit platforms to be built.
- There is a lack of labelling of health services and differentiation by sex. As well as minor improvements to the doors.

FOOD SECURITY



Implemented actions

- SENAFRONT periodically provides unprocessed food to migrants.
- IOM has donated unprocessed food for these people.

HEALTH



Implemented actions

- Transfers to hospitals and primary care centres are being carried out in coordination between MINSAs and SENAFRONT. There are two ambulances (shared with MRS La Peñita) and air transport through the Naval Air Service from the community of San Vicente.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT



Implemented actions

- It has a space available, suitable and equipped for kitchen and dining room. Migrants are responsible for cooking their own food.
- Cleaning supplies are available for the infrastructure.

PROTECTION



Implemented actions

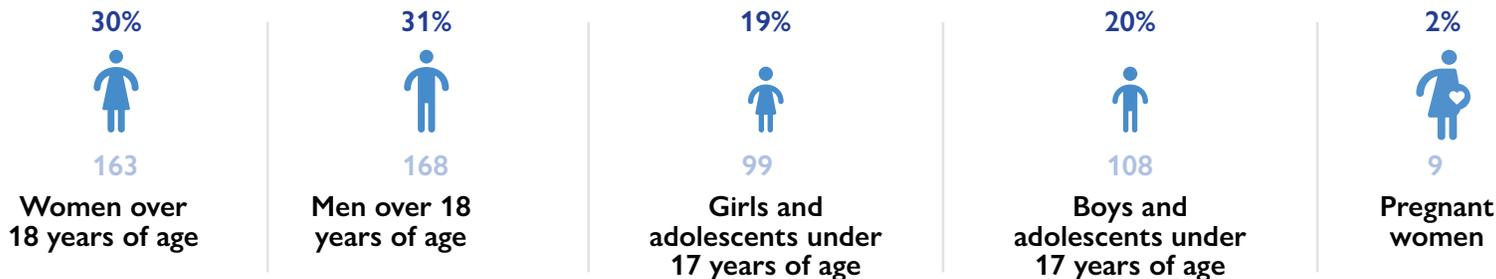
- Migrants are covered by MINSAs's active protocol for dealing with positive cases of COVID-19.

STATISTICS OF THE MIGRANT POPULATION SHELTERED AT MRS LOS PLANES

16 APRIL, 2020



538
 Sheltered migrants

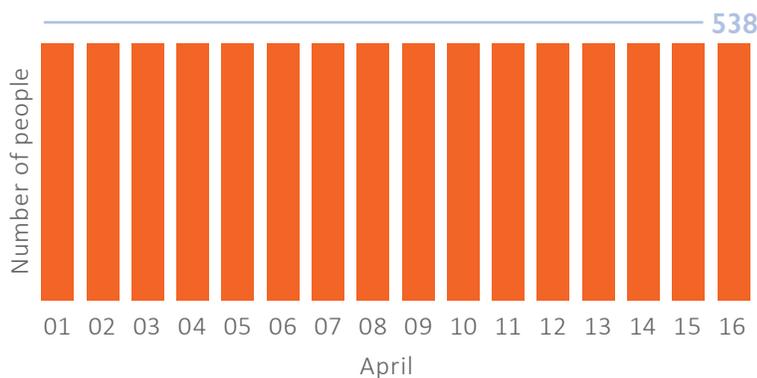


HIGHLIGHTED NATIONALITIES



The remaining 8% corresponds to 17 nationalities from various countries in South America, Africa, South Asia; as well as minors born in Panama.

NUMBER OF MIGRANTS SHELTERED AT MRS LOS PLANES, APRIL 2020



SERVICES IN THE MRS FOR MIGRANTS AND THEIR AVAILABILITY DURING THE PANDEMIC IN CONTRAST TO THE MINIMUM HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS



STATISTICS ON COVID19 CASES



0
 identified cases of COVID-19
 in the migration flow

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN MRS LOS PLANES

All actions are being taken by the Government of Panama at MRS Los Planes, based on the capacities of the responsible institutions and in collaboration with IOM, especially in the protection sector.

WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION (WASH)



Implemented Actions

- There are two 15.000 gallon water tanks capable of supplying the station every day. Tanks are chlorinated with 3 tablets daily based on recommendation from the health personnel.
- There are supplies of bottled water, in priority cases due to health recommendations specifically for pregnant women and children.

Identified needs

- More frequent cleaning of latrines and repair of damaged units
- It has been identified that the migrant population uses common areas to perform their physiological needs such as defecation or urination.
- Development and printing of informational materials in the predominant languages spoken in the accommodations and handed out to the MRS migrant population and host communities regarding the COVID19 outbreak, WHO recommendations and MINSAs national guidelines on hand washing and hygiene practices and symptom-identification campaigns.
- Install hand-washing stations; provided at minimum standard of 1 in 10 inhabitants per accommodation, in accordance with Sphere Standard N 6.3 "WASH in health facilities" in order to increase prevention measures.
- Support an adequate socialization of guidelines and routes of medical attention as set by MINSAs before the COVID19 outbreak, with the engagement of MRS staff, the host community, UN organizations and civil society.
- Promotion of proper hygiene practices and personal hygiene kits.

Identified needs

- There are no specific dietary requirements established for children under 5 years old, chronically ill people or pregnant women.
- Migrants have expressed their dissatisfaction with the food they receive, the reasons ranging from health conditions to cultural habits.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT



Implemented Actions

- NMS officials and migrant volunteers carried out repairs to the pipeline system.
- Clean-up days are organized among NMS staff and migrant volunteers.

Identified needs

- Repairs and lighting are required throughout the station, mainly in areas where latrines and sanitary batteries are located.
- There are spaces that could be used as rooms or latrines; however, they are not enabled because they are deteriorated and require repair.
- There is no differentiation in the use of bathrooms by sex or age.
- There is a high risk of fire, because at this time there are pine trees very close to the electrical wiring.
- There is no evacuation plan or emergency contingency measures.
- The solid waste landfill, which is authorized for station use, has collapsed and there is no plan for recovering recoverable waste.

FOOD SECURITY



Implemented Actions

- NMS maintains meal services three times a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. It offers an equal distribution of food portions, but is insufficient according to adequate caloric loads.

PROTECTION



Implemented Actions

- SENAFRONT maintains 8 units that are responsible for maintaining order and protecting the MRS perimeter.
- SENAFRONT provides support in coordinating with the institutions responsible for processing the identification documents, such as birth records, citizenship cards, death certificates, among others.
- IOM provides support in channeling routes for the protection and assistance of migrants who are vulnerable or at risk, and provides access-protection information to migrants.

IOM has worked on a series of recommendations in accordance with the Temporary Shelter Management Manual to address specific protection needs, which have been adapted to the Station according to its possibilities.

Identified needs

- Migrants usually decide not to formally report acts of violence, family separation or cases that merit legal protection and custody, because they fear it might eventually delay their migration journey. At the institutional level, mitigation measures have been established in the event of violence, such as the immediate distancing of couples and the temporary protection of women and children who suffer from some kind of aggression by a perpetrator. This has been made in coordination with the authorities from Costa Rica's General Directorate on Migration and Immigration.
- There are no permanent institutions that support processing applications for shelter, psychosocial support or that address specific protection needs with a differential approach.
- There is no access to information on the migration process or general related issues, and in different languages. Information is only disseminated for important communications and done through spokespersons from the migrant population or with a language translation phone app.
- The NMS has requested the management of sports equipment for the use of the facilities by the migrants.

HEALTH



Implemented Actions

- MINSA maintains a permanent medical station at the MRS, which is open: Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. It is staffed with a doctor; including a paramedic four days a week, from 04:00 pm to 08:00 pm intended for emergencies only.
- MINSA and the NMS are the entities responsible for providing support and information to the families of individuals who require hospitalization.

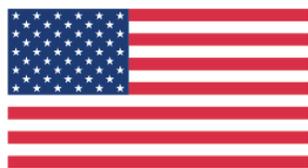
Identified needs

- The MRS Los Planes does not have an ambulance. SENAFRONT provides emergency transportation with the MRS patrol vehicle, but it is not outfitted with the minimum standards for emergency transfers, and is intended as a multiple use vehicle.
- There is no access to birth control methods, such as condoms.
- There are reports of viral illnesses related to colds, diarrhea, vomiting and skin rashes. Medical attention and medicines are provided, in cases of not having medicines in the MRS, health personnel provide a prescription to be exchanged in commercial pharmacies, however migrants have to cover the expenses related to the purchase of medicines.

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