



Improved self-reliance and economic inclusion of refugees in Panama

Concept Note for: *Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Host Community Graduation Approach Project in Panama*

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— The Poverty Alleviation Coalition —



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Project Summary

For the implementation of this program, HIAS and UNHCR are aiming to target 4,500 households in 4 years. The total budget needed for achieving this goal is \$US 5,027,880.

FUNDING REQUEST AND GAPS

- > \$US 5,027,880
 - > Project request funding for first implementation and piloting in the Panamanian context.
-

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- > HIAS PANAMA
-

IMPLEMENTING LOCATIONS AND NUMBER OF RECIPIENT HOUSEHOLDS

- > Panama city
 - > West Panama
 - > San Miguelito
 - > Chiriqui
 - > Total of households 4,500 households
-

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERS

- > Trickle Up / HIAS Ecuador
-

RESEARCH PARTNERS

- > IPA/ Innovation For Poverty Action

ACRONYMS

BPRM	US Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CoP	Community of Practice
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GoP	Government of Panama
GA	Graduation Approach
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
KYC	Know Your Client
LPMD	Less Poverty, More Development (government program)
LII	Local Integration Index
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PEI	Partnership for Economic Inclusion
PoC	Person of Concern
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UNHCR	The UN Refugee Agency

Background

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Panama is home to over 422,000 migrants¹, including forcibly displaced persons from across Central and South America, including Colombia, the Northern Triangle, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The UNHCR-IOM Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform estimates Panama currently hosts up to 95,000 Venezuelans alone, the largest in Central America. Panama has witnessed an increase of asylum claims during the last years with more than 28,000 between 2014 and June 2019 according to figures of the National Office of the Attention for Refugees (ONPAR).

Refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants throughout Panama face widespread xenophobia. Government officials lack awareness of the rights refugees and asylum seekers have to access basic services. Xenophobia sentiment is strong in the country, and refugee and asylum seeker children report bullying in local communities and schools.

A new law requires asylum seekers to register within six months of arrival. The short timeframe is seen as infringement the right to seek international protection. Refugees and asylum seekers have few opportunities to access complementary forms of protection, including student visas, work permits, and permanent residency, which are expensive for most. Legal protection is only granted to the main family head, as being the only one who receives individual documentation as asylum seekers, leaving family member in rather vulnerable situation until admitted to procedure. The need for individual and community-based legal advice for refugees and asylum seekers in Panama is critical.

In addition to legal needs and migratory regularization demands, refugees and asylum seekers face other risks. Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual abuse are some of the risk factors in Panama for refugees and asylum seekers. While waiting on asylum petition resolutions from Panamanian authorities (which can take several years), refugee women are unable to enter the formal labor market and many resorts to negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex and child labor to cover their basic needs.

Nicaragua's situation has recorded an estimated 2,500 cases of asylum seekers, mainly from March to December 2018. Nicaraguan asylum applications add up to the first largest situation in the context of refugees in Panama during 2019, from January to May the National Office of the Attention for Refugees ONPAR has recorded an estimated 2,527 asylum seekers.

Despite the Peace Agreement between the Colombian State and the FARC, safe conditions have not yet been generated for the return of the refugee population to Colombia. Even if the peace talks with the FARC and the ELN were finally successful, experts have suggested that violence and internal and external displacement in Colombia are unlikely to cease in the short and medium term. This is due in large part to the emergence of new armed groups (NGA), also called Criminal Bands (BACRIM), formed by remnants of right-wing paramilitary groups that demobilized ostensibly between 2003 and 2006, who use violence and displacement to control populations and economic activities, including parts of the irregular economy. Given the efforts to protect the victims of the conflict, the ability of the Colombian government to provide protection is very limited in areas where there is a strong presence of the NGA and / or Guerrilla Groups.

¹ According to Panama's National Institute of Statistics and Census. <https://reliefweb.int/report/panama/somos-lo-mismo-solidarity-campaign-refugees-migrants-launched-panama>

On the other hand, new forms of violence have been identified in the context of North Central America (NCA), understand Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The high rates of violence, particularly in El Salvador and Honduras led UNHCR to publish the Eligibility Guidelines for the Assessment of International Protection Needs of asylum seekers from El Salvador (March 2016) and Honduras. Gangs (Mara Salvatrucha and M-18) maintain control of certain territories, their communities, inhabitants and threaten people's lives and freedom. UNHCR has identified profiles of gang victims who may be in need of international protection, such as merchants (including small entrepreneurs), teachers, women, children and children in certain contexts, among others.

In 2017, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was measured for the first time in Panama, whose results placed the percentage of people in a condition of multidimensional poverty at 19.1%. The second measurement, made this year 2018, shows reductions. Thus, the proportion of people in poverty Multidimensional was calculated at 19.0%, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared to 2017². The dimensions to calculate the poverty are based on health, education, employment, environment and sanitation, and basic services, access to internet and living.

² Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional de Panamá 2019 <https://www.mides.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/MED-DAES-Informe-del-%c3%84ndice-de-Pobreza-Multidimensional-de-Panam%c3%a1-2018-I.pdf>

Project Operating Model

PROJECT GOAL

The overall goal is to contribute to increase the self-reliance and integration of refugees, asylum seekers and host communities in Panama through the Graduation Model Approach.

PROJECT APPROACH:

The Graduation Approach is an 18-month comprehensive programme that has proven very good results in addressing the multiple economic and social vulnerabilities that extremely poor families face. Graduation is more effective than many traditional livelihoods programs as it combines livelihoods protection (consumption support and savings) with livelihoods promotion (assets and skills) to ultimately achieve self-reliance, resilience and integration.

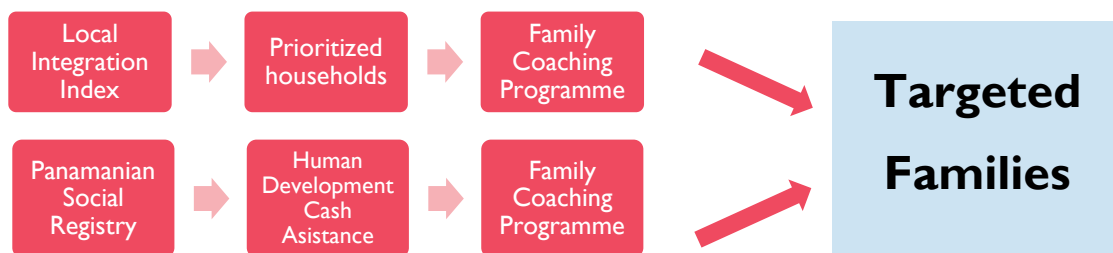
The implementation of the Graduation Model in Panama will include the following phases and activities:

1. Preparatory phase:

1.1 Market and socio-economic assessments undertaken to understand the market vis-à-vis refugees' socio-economic profile and to identify the types of income generating activities families could engage in through the program.

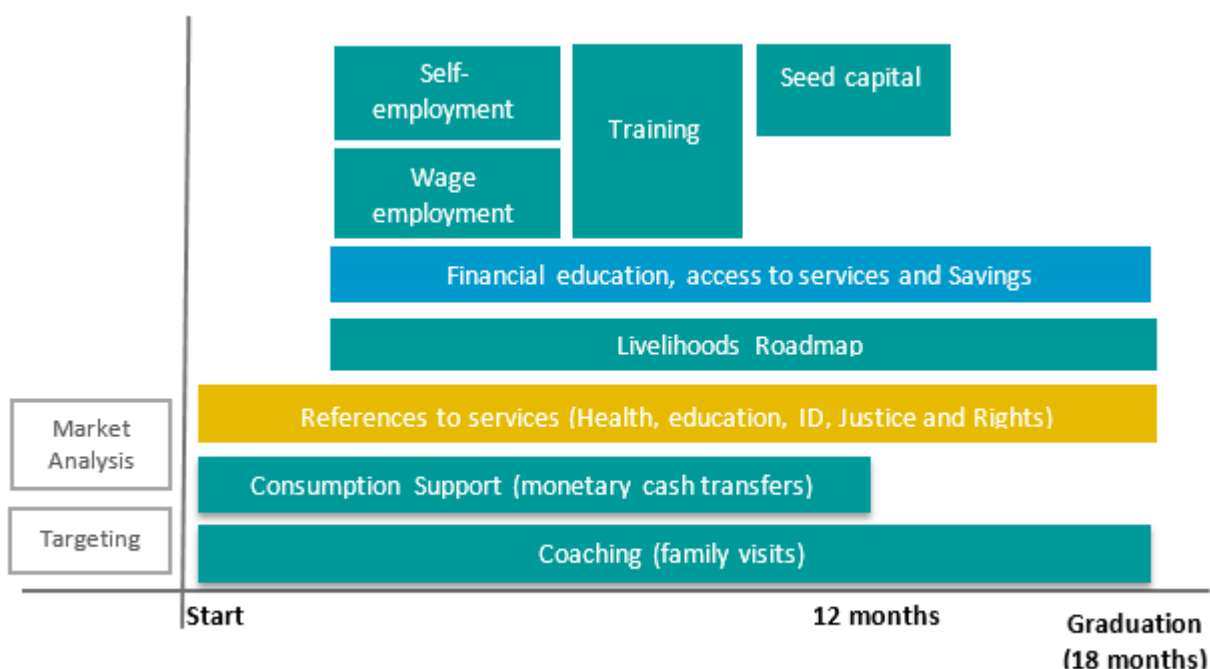
1.2 Targeting: refers to the process of identifying households living in extreme poverty to be included in the program.

- 1) For beneficiaries (refugees, asylum seekers and host communities), households will be screened based on a [Local Integration Index](#) that defines their levels of vulnerability and economic and social inclusion. HIAS staff complete a questionnaire during the household registration process, which includes questions on legal, economic and socio-cultural aspects such as the household's situation in the country, perceived integration, access to services, living conditions and income level. Those households that score certain points or less are eligible for the Graduation program. Those that have special protection needs may be referred to specific protection support before they are considered for the program.
- 2) Priority households are identified from the pool of pre-selected households based on different protection profiles, including youth- and female-headed households, households with young children and pregnant teenagers, people with disability or chronic diseases and households with victims of SGBV or torture survivors.
- 3) A staff from HIAS will conduct home visits to validate the household information and further assess the household's needs and interest in taking part in the program.



2. Implementation Phase:

The implementation phase includes the following components:



Coaching: involves regular home visits by a coach who provides mentoring and psychosocial support to help participants progress through the program. Coaching will be implemented by HIAS through “social promoters”, that assess participant households’ needs holistically, including protection, livelihoods development, and other basic needs. Coaches thus develop a holistic understanding of the needs of participants, facilitate coordination with other departments within HIAS (such as livelihoods, psychology and community integration), by UNHCR (such as legal and protection support), or by other partners (within or external to the program). The coaching process last 18 months.

Consumption support: The support will be provided through cash transfers for 12 months, the amount of which varies by household size. Both, Panamanian and refugee households receive the same cash support amount. Additionally, all families receive nutritional guidance from coaches. Furthermore, families who struggle to achieve food security are invited to participate in “urban gardens” or city allotments.

Financial inclusion: This component includes financial education, savings, and access to bank accounts and credits, and is implemented in partnership with financial service providers.

Community Inclusion and network development: participants will be included in group training that also develop networks and inclusion among participant families.

Livelihood Promotion: The programme will also include livelihoods coaches that support families from month 2 or 3 of the program. Families develop a livelihood plan, based on the market assessments, but also on the experience and interest of the person who is able to engage in livelihoods activities. This component includes training, seed capital and networking with the private sector.

FAMILIES CAN OPT FOR EMPLOYMENT OR SELF-EMPLOYMENT. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Outcome 1: Improved food security and nutrition through cash transfers and training.

Outcome 2: Enhanced self-reliance and economic resilience through employment, business opportunities and financial inclusion.

Outcome 3: Increased access to rights through awareness, advocacy and a reinforced social protection system.

Outcome 4: Strengthened social integration and participation, through joint interventions with host communities.

The **theory of change** to achieve the proposed objectives is the following:

If refugees and vulnerable Panamanian families have food security, basic needs are covered and have improved access to social protection services, they will be in a better position to start developing networks, participate in trainings and find a job or develop their own business.

If they have access to sustainable income generating activities (employment or self-employment), increased savings, assets, and networks, they will be better prepared to face shocks and stressors, becoming more resilient.

This improved resilience will lead to strengthened self-reliance and economic and social inclusion, enabling them to achieve lasting solutions that assure their protection.

Thus, they will be in a better position to contribute to the local economies.

Project Impact and Sustainability

INTENDED IMPACT

As a result of the programme, successful participating families will have accomplished the following impact criteria:

During its time of implementation in others contexts, the GA has been presented as a valuable tool for reducing the rates of violence, increasing protection environments and generation of sustainable livelihoods. In this regard, the expected impact indicators for the implementation of the program are presented below:

Under the gender approach, the expected positive impacts are:

- In terms of economic self-sufficiency, the program plans to generate productive initiatives for 80% of the head of household women.
- The empowerment and increase of the protection environment of the participating women, through the delivery of monetary assistance to their families.
- 1 in 3 women will improve their income, favouring a harmonious family life.
- Reduction of gender violence rates during the participation of families in the programme.
- Increase the resilience of women who have been victims of gender violence or domestic violence.

Regarding social and economic benefits of the programme:

INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	INDICATOR	OBSERVATIONS
# of families that participate on the program	4,500	4,500 families, including host communities, will be included on the Graduation Approach in 4 years.
# of persons that participate on the program	18,000	The programme will include 18,000 persons on the family coaching process.
% of effectiveness on graduation process expected	70%	The expectation of graduation process is 70%, over the total of families that reach the 18 months of the programme. This, thus the experience of graduation in other countries in the region.
# of bussiness designed and implemented	2,800	Over 2,800 new business ideas will be designed and implemented in 4 years. The objective of the program is that 60% of the developed enterprises remain active after their first year of operation, despite the fact that in the country only 1 in 10 enterprises sustain themselves after the first year.
# of professional training scholarships delivered	2,500	Over 2,500 beneficiaries will receive professional training in order to enhance their

		skills and increase their access to the labor market.
% of families expected to overcome extreme poverty	81%	81% of the families of Graduation Approach will overcome the extreme poverty line
% of families expected to reach a minimum consumption of nutritious food groups	90%	90% of the families will achieve their food security through the acquisition of nutritional eating habits
% of families expected the access to financial services programmes	50%	At least the 50% of the families will be includes on financial services programs

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Table 3: Logical Framework

Outcome and Outputs	Activities	Indicative Indicators
Outcome 1: Improved food security and nutrition through cash transfers and training.	<p>1.1 Consumption support delivered through cash interventions.</p> <p>1.2 Training on food security and nutrition education to achieve the minimum consumption of nutritious food groups, based on individual assessments.</p>	<p># of participants that reach the minimum consumption of nutritious food groups.</p> <p># of trained participants.</p>
Outcome 2: Enhanced self-reliance and economic resilience through employment, business opportunities and financial inclusion.	<p>2.1 Labour profile assessment and matching with market needs.</p> <p>2.2 Skills training to improve opportunities in the labour market (entrepreneurship or wage employment).</p> <p>2.3 Entrepreneurship support: Business model training, design and delivery of seed capital.</p> <p>2.4 Referrals and advocacy with the private sector for</p>	<p># of participants receiving individual employment consultation (job referrals and information on income generating possibilities through entrepreneurship).</p> <p>% of participants that develop an income generating activity who report a higher household income level at the end of the programme.</p> <p>% of participants that improve savings after the financial literacy training.</p>

Outcome and Outputs	Activities	Indicative Indicators
	<p>wage employment opportunities or access to markets.</p> <p>2.5 Financial literacy training and promote access to financial services.</p>	
<p>Outcome 3: Increased access to rights through awareness, advocacy and a reinforced social protection system.</p>	<p>2.1 Implement community assessments.</p> <p>2.2 Conduct awareness creation on rights and access to services of the social protection system.</p> <p>2.3 Develop capacity building platforms with the social protection system actors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > # of referrals and advocacy activities coordinated with the social protection system. > # of participants that improve access to protection services.
<p>Outcome 4: Strengthened social integration and participation, through joint interventions with host communities.</p>	<p>4.1 Implement community workshops to promote integration.</p> <p>4.2 Support the creation of psychosocial and productive networks that include host communities and refugees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > # of community workshops implemented. > # of integration networks supported.

Project Management and Governance

Coalition Organisational capacity UNHCR Panama has a representation in the capital. UNHCR works in close coordination with the Government, civil society, UN agencies and refugees and asylum-seekers in Panama. UNHCR has established partnership agreements with different national and international organizations, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, RET, HIAS, the Human Mobility Pastoral (PMH) the Panamanian Red Cross, the refugee Education Trust (RET) and Programa Enlaces (Fundación Espacio Creativo). Also, a Partnership Agreement with the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR) was established to channel support and continue strengthening the asylum system in the country.

UNHCR also works in close coordination with government institutions, namely with the ONPAR, part of the Ministry of Interior, and with the National Commission for Refugee Protection, the child protection entity, border police, national institution for women protection and the Ombudsman Office. These alliances are equally reinforced at municipality level, as is the case in Darien province.

The International Non-Governmental Organization HIAS has its main office in Panama. Throughout the country has one office, covering the zones of West Panama, East Panama, San Miguelito and Panama City. In addition, HIAS Panama has presence in the province of Chiriqui to implement psychosocial intervention with children and adolescents.

HIAS Panama has an Economic Inclusion team that will be in charge of the integral intervention implementation. This team is led by the Economic Inclusion Coordinator who follows up the implementation. HIAS will have a Graduation Program Officer, who will manage the GA program in Panama. The Graduation Program Officer also supervises the work of frontline staff (in alliance with the Economic Inclusion Coordinator) and coordinates with the M&E Officer for the implementation of the M&E system. The Economic Inclusion Coordinator will liaise with UNHCR and other partners (thus also supporting coordination amongst partners).

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:

UNHCR and HIAS, with support from Trickle Up, will use the experience of the GMA implementation in other contexts in the LAC region to pilot and scale up the intervention in Panama. This process of adaptive management has been enabled in other HIAS operations by an organizational culture that has been open to trial and error and to learning from practice.

Based on the good results from the joint UNHCR / HIAS horizontal coordination model, this project will keep a “inter-institutional committee”, which meets every three months to facilitate coordination at a national level between HIAS - UNHCR and other stakeholders. The committee assesses overall program progress and discusses improvement plans and strategies when needed. When needed, specific technical areas groups can be conformed, to review an area of concern.

Also, at the local level, there is also a “case review committee” that evaluates participant cases, mostly those who are underperforming and find solutions and strategies of support.

Monitoring and Evaluation

MONITORING

Each organization will be reporting directly to their donors on the project. HIAS has a robust internal platform to capture data from participants. Initial data is captured by HIAS staff during the targeting process (used to calculate the LII), and additional participant-level data is captured by coaches on every visit (two visits per month) using tablets. Monitoring data tracks progress through the GA components, Graduation criteria indicators, and graduation status, etc.

Family coaching and support: An important component of the programme are family visits and coaching, which allows to track the progress of each family, towards a family plan that is developed in the beginning of the intervention. The family plan includes all the support that the family needs, related to the family composition and the situation of each family member (for example, medical attention required for pregnant women), as well as the responsibilities that the family need to comply with (like ensuring kids go to school).

During family visits, coaches can gather information on the difficulties and barriers family members are facing, and propose several actions of support, either by direct response from HIAS/UNHCR or through referrals to other institutions and partners.

Project Budget

FUNDING REQUEST

For the implementation of this program, HIAS and UNHCR are aiming to target 4,500 households per year, which means that in 4 years 18,000 people will have participated in this program. The total budget needed for achieving this goal is \$ 5,027,880.00 USD. Please see a reference budget in the next item.

Figure 3: Financial structure of the project

PROJECT BUDGET

The budget is formulated considering current market prices, and based on the experience of the Graduation Model Approach in Ecuador. Even that the amount could change according the donors proposal and context changes. With the proposed budget, each year 1,125 families will be included on the programme.

Table 7: Project budget over 4 years

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	TOTAL
Program Costs	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 4,275,000.00
Outcome 1: Improved food security and nutrition through cash transfers and training.	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 540,000.00
Outcome 2: Enhanced self-reliance and economic resilience through employment, business opportunities and financial inclusion.	\$ 765,000.00	\$ 765,000.00	\$ 765,000.00	\$ 765,000.00	\$ 3,060,000.00
Outcome 3: Increased access to rights through awareness, advocacy and a reinforced social protection system.	\$ 56,250.00	\$ 56,250.00	\$ 56,250.00	\$ 56,250.00	\$ 225,000.00
Outcome 4: Strengthened social integration and participation, through joint interventions with host communities.	\$ 112,500.00	\$ 112,500.00	\$ 112,500.00	\$ 112,500.00	\$ 450,000.00
Staffing Cost	\$ 156,720.00	\$ 156,720.00	\$ 156,720.00	\$ 156,720.00	\$ 626,880.00
Direct Staff	\$ 107,520.00	\$ 107,520.00	\$ 107,520.00	\$ 107,520.00	\$ 430,080.00
Support Staff	\$ 49,200.00	\$ 49,200.00	\$ 49,200.00	\$ 49,200.00	\$ 196,800.00
Indirect Costs	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 126,000.00
Travel and Transportation	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 24,000.00
Supplies, Rent and Utilities	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 96,000.00
Implementation Costs	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 6,000.00
Total	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 1,068,750.00	\$ 5,027,880.00

ANY IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

- HIAS will provide TA and all its capacity to implement the project with all the quality standards.
- Trickle Up will provide TA on the implementation when funding is provided