

Respuesta de la OIM ante el COVID-19 en Panamá

Construction of San Vicente Reception Center



INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

This document brings insights on IOM Panama's efforts during the construction of the San Vicente migrant reception center, an initiative planned to provide stranded migrants with a more adequate structure to wait for the reopening of national borders, during the COVID-19 pandemic. For further information on the topic, consult the [main knowledge product](#) covering IOM Panama's experience.

During 2020, as the government of Panama closed borders to curb the spread of COVID-19, many extra-regional and extra-continental migrants, transiting from Colombia to North America, became stranded. In this context, IOM Panama coordinated with other stakeholders to provide a comprehensive response to assist beneficiaries on the ground.



OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICE

With the clear overcrowding of IOM's existing structure in southern Panama, IOM, in partnership with other U.N agencies and the government of Panama, formalized the intention to build a new migrant reception station to support stranded migrants by providing minimum standard humanitarian assistance to this vulnerable group. The government made land available, and the inter-agency group came together to provide technical know-how and logistical support during construction of the San Vicente Reception Center. **IOM Panama focused specifically on providing advice on the materials to be used according to environmental considerations and the space distribution of San Vicente.**



San Vicente Migrant Reception Center – Darien, Panama.



LESSONS LEARNED

- IOM Panama managed to employ its **previous knowledge on temporary shelters in tropical and humid climates to provide valuable technical support** to the Panamanian government during construction of the reception center.
- IOM Panama also found an opportunity to **conduct capacity building with government officials employed in San Vicente**, particularly in terms of guidelines to ensure conviviality and harmony in shelters.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- While IOM's technical knowledge about shelters proved to be instrumental during construction, **technical advice to the government could have been initiated previously**, to incorporate humanitarian criteria in the government's action plan before implementation.

