

Cuba

Nov - Dec 2022

Cuba is not a State party to international refugee instruments. **UNHCR provides international protection** to refugees under its mandate.

With support from the government, UNHCR ensures that refugees have **access to healthcare** and **education** services. With limited integration opportunities, **most refugees are in need of resettlement** as their only possible durable solution.

Vulnerabilities of asylum-seekers and refugees have increased due to the COVID-19-related social and economic downturn, among other factors, including **shortages** of basic items (like **food** and **medicine**), affecting refugees and host communities alike.

People UNHCR protects

158 refugees and asylum seekers under UNHCR's mandate (as of 31 December 2022)

58 per cent of refugees do not have a migratory status granted by the government; **52 per cent** of them are women and children

71 people in need of resettlement

Main nationalities

Western Sahara, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Yemen

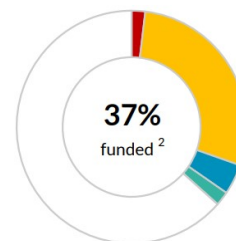
CONTEXT

In coordination with the government, **UNHCR processes asylum claims under its mandate**. While refugees and asylum seekers can access free healthcare and education services, people UNHCR protects are not allowed to engage in income-generating activities, which makes them fully dependent on the Agency's assistance.

During the economic crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees' situation considerably worsened, with difficulties to access food, hygiene items, and medicines. As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, refugees and asylum seekers were granted access to the governmental rationing system and the national vaccination programme, on equal footing as nationals.

UNHCR participates in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework signed with the Cuban government, as well as in the UN Socio-Economic COVID-19 Response Plan to protect vulnerable groups, including refugees and asylum seekers.

STATE OF PLAY: FUNDING RECEIVED VS. FUNDING NEEDS (AS OF 29 DECEMBER 2022)



US\$ 54.3 M

UNHCR's financial requirements 2022¹

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

¹ The financial requirements for the **Panama Multi-Country Office** include those for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation. **Cuba** is part of the **Panama MCO** since 2021 along with Panama, Nicaragua, Belize, Guyana and the Southern Caribbean.

² The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions

UNHCR supports people and areas affected by category 3 Hurricane Ian



UNHCR distributed 19,628 solar lamps and 140 tents to those affected by the category 3 Hurricane Ian in Pinar del Río.

Working with Partners

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the official counterpart of UNHCR in Cuba. UNHCR also collaborates with the ministries of Education, Public Health, and Foreign Trade and International Collaboration, and with the Cuban Red Cross. Several academic institutions such as the University of Havana and the Group of International Humanitarian Law Studies collaborate in the dissemination of information related to International Refugee Law.

Main Activities

Alongside the government, partner organizations, civil society, development actors, and UN Agencies, UNHCR undertakes protection and solutions activities, including:

Advocacy |

UNHCR promotes Cuba's accession to international refugee protection and statelessness instruments, as well as the adoption of measures to improve access to rights and services. Moreover, UNHCR **raises awareness of refugee issues** through the ongoing dissemination of International Refugee Law and its principles among government institutions, NGOs, and academia, seeking to promote a refugee-sensitive culture.

Protection |

UNHCR **provides international protection to people under UNHCR mandate**, including with Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and the search for durable solutions. UNHCR **provides legal counselling to refugees and asylum seekers** on RSD procedures and national regulations pertinent to their status and their protection in general, as well as durable solutions assessments and procedures, including resettlement.

Cash-based Interventions and Assistance |

Due to the lack of a defined legal status, many refugees and asylum seekers cannot access employment, secure livelihoods, and have limited access to income-generating alternatives. The Agency **carries out activities aimed at ensuring safety and access to basic needs** of the people UNHCR protects. Since January 2021, UNHCR has supported **over 250 people**.

Education and Training Opportunities |

Thanks to verbal agreements with the Cuban government, refugees and asylum seekers have access to free primary and secondary education. Approximately **70 young refugees**, most of them from Western Sahara, have **access to university studies**. UNHCR provides small complementary assistance to the government scholarships for refugee students in vulnerable situations to help cover their most basic needs while in Cuba.

Inter-agency Coordination |

In September, the western part of the island, mainly the Pinar del Rio province, was seriously impacted by category 3 Hurricane Ian. In collaboration with the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and the Emergency Response Group in the country, UNHCR donated **23,400 solar lamps and 180 tents** to people affected by the hurricane in that area.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Canada, the European Union, France, Guyana, the United States of America, and the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS. We also thank the fundamental support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR with unearmarked and softly earmarked funds: Belgium | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | the United Kingdom. Private donors in Australia | Canada | Germany | Italy | Japan | the Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | and the United States

For more information:

In Cuba, Laura Solá, Assistant Protection Officer, sola@unhcr.org, Tel: +537 204-1512, +537 204-1513, +537 204-1514

In Cuba, Rafael Guerra, Protection Associate, guerraor@unhcr.org, Tel: +537 204-1512, +537 204-1513, +537 204-1514

In MCO Panama, Viola Eleonora Bruttomesso, Associate Communications Officer, bruttome@unhcr.org

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UNHCR presence in Cuba

