MCO PANAMA
CARIBBEAN COVERAGE FACTSHEET

APRIL-JUNE 2026

From April to June

100
government officials sensitized on refugee protection and access to health services.

55
people were informed about the asylum system, access to essential services, and UNHCR's mandate.

15,000
mental health consultations were provided.

©UNHCR-UNHCR Cuba participates in inter-agency discussions on the implementation of the country's new Migration, Citizenship, and Foreign Nationals Laws.

Situation

Across the Caribbean, the second quarter saw continued discussions on regularization initiatives, **border security**, the promotion of accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, including the implementation of a regional Plan of Action to engage the five Caribbean States that have not yet acceded, and the advancement of third-country national agreements (**TCNAs**) with the US, including the arrival of a first group of individuals in **St. Kitts and Nevis**.

Following the 24 June earthquakes that struck Venezuela, **tremors** were felt in several islands, though no damage was reported. The event prompted expressions of solidarity from countries across the region, including Aruba, Curaçao, **Barbados**, Guyana, and **Trinidad and Tobago**.

In Cuba, the **humanitarian situation** remained critical, with fuel shortages and **power outages** disrupting basic services and food production, while rising **social tensions**. Nearly 400 **medicines** are reportedly unavailable, and some 100,000 surgeries have been postponed. **Cuban authorities** reported no significant progress in diplomatic **talks** with the US amid increasing **sanctions**, linked to the closure of **businesses** and disruptions to **financial services**. In response, authorities announced a package of 176 **reforms** aimed at promoting economic stabilization.

Despite challenges, the quarter also registered positive developments. Trinidad and Tobago was elected to a non-permanent seat on the **UN Security Council,** and the **European Court of Human Rights** published a judgment in a case from Curaçao, underscoring the importance of effective protection safeguards. In Cuba, the Government published the Migration, Citizenship, and Foreign Nationals Laws in the **Official Gazette**, introducing a humanitarian residence status for individuals under UNHCR's mandate that enables them to access fundamental rights under conditions equivalent to those granted to permanent residents.

Highlights

- UNHCR participated in the twenty-ninth Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Standing Committee of Chiefs of Immigration and Comptrollers of Customs (CICC) in Antigua and Barbuda, a key regional platform on border security. Marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Agency discussed the important role asylum frameworks play in helping countries respond to displacement.
- In Cuba, UNHCR held an information session for over 100 health officials on access to healthcare for refugees and asylum-seekers. The session reviewed Ministry of Public Health Resolution 230 of 2026, which reinforces existing access to health services for people under UNHCR's mandate through a formal legal framework.
- Thanks to ECHO support, UNHCR supported the Migrant Registration Framework (MRF) in Trinidad and Tobago, by providing biometric registration and documentation equipment, including 20 iris scanners, 20 fingerprint scanners, two card printers, and 15,000 registration cards, and trained 25 officials on its use. The extended MRF, announced in December 2025, now gives people with irregular status, regardless of nationality, an opportunity to obtain temporary authorization to live and work in the country.
- In Barbados, UNHCR participated in the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States (LDCs/SIDS) Trust Fund Regional Workshop, organized by OHCHR, with the participation of Caribbean States and regional partners, including the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). The Agency exchanged experiences with participants and explored opportunities to further strengthen protection frameworks for people forced to flee.
- UNHCR implemented a regional Plan of Action to promote accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol among the five Caribbean States that have not yet acceded: Barbados, Cuba, Grenada, Guyana, and Saint Lucia. Through bilateral engagement with governments, including Permanent Missions in Geneva and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR provided information and technical guidance to support consideration of accession. In addition, UNHCR contributed submissions on Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia to the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council, highlighting opportunities to strengthen refugee protection frameworks.

Operational overview

UNHCR has a longstanding engagement in the Caribbean, supporting refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and others in need of international protection. The region faces evolving mobility and protection challenges driven by mixed movements, climate-related events, insecurity, and diverse legal frameworks. Since September 2025, UNHCR's Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Panama has expanded its coverage to 22 countries and territories, most of them in this region . In partnership with governments, civil society, regional institutions, and UN agencies, UNHCR works in the Caribbean to strengthen protection systems, promote inclusion, and improve access to rights and services for vulnerable groups under its mandate.

In the Caribbean, discussions continue on the development of asylum legislation and regularization pathways. In the photo, UNHCR participates in the twenty-ninth CARICOM CICC meeting.

In 2026, nearly 30,000 people applied for the first phase of Trinidad and Tobago's expanded MRF initiative. UNHCR donated specialized equipment to support its implementation.

Story. From Refugee to Doctoral Student: Fajer's Story of Resilience

As a child fleeing the conflict, Fajer arrived in Cuba in 2011, unsure of what the future would hold. Over the years, he learned Spanish, completed his studies, and is now pursuing a doctorate. During Cuba's World Refugee Day commemoration, attended by government representatives, civil society, and the United Nations, Fajer shared his story of resilience and gratitude for the opportunities he found in his new home. His journey reflects Cuba's longstanding commitment to ensuring refugees and asylum-seekers can access essential services, including education, even amid a challenging context. It also highlights the importance of inclusion as Cuba advances the implementation of new legislation introducing humanitarian residency for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. To hear Fajer's full testimony, **click here**.

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For more information
Amanda Solano, Associate Protection Officer Panama **solano@unhcr.org**
Benedetta Pignatti, External Relations Officer at **pignattb@unhcr.org**

For media interviews: **panpamedia@unhcr.org**

This document focuses on 17 countries within MCO Panama's AOR in the Caribbean, namely: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. For additional updates on Belize, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, please refer to MCO Panama's Data Portal.