FACT SHEET

Cuba

October-December 2025

Key Figures

190
Refugees and asylum-seekers from **16 countries** are under UNHCR's mandate.

39 per cent
Lacked legal status in the country, and **33 per cent** were women and children.

34
Refugees needed resettlement. Most are from Syria, Palestine, Russia, Afghanistan, Haiti, Ethiopia, Burundi and South Sudan.

Context

Cuba is not a state signatory to international refugee instruments. UNHCR ensures refugees are protected from refoulement and have access to essential services, conducts refugee status determination (RSD) under mandate, and seeks durable solutions in the country. Although the National Assembly approved new immigration and citizenship legislation in mid-2024, the laws have yet to enter into force.

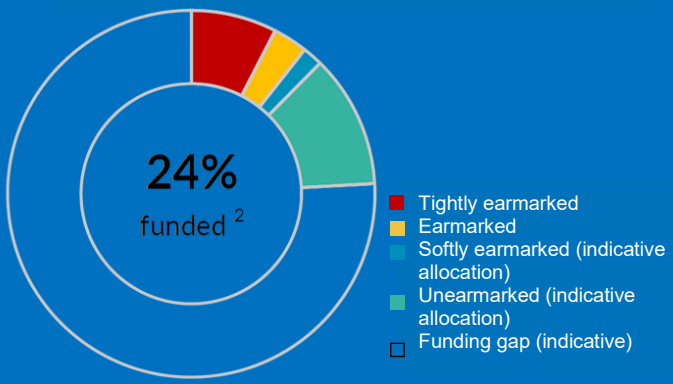
Cuba's ongoing high inflation, partial dollarization, electricity shortages, and shortages of essential goods, food, medicine, and fuel continue to affect critical segments of the population, including forcibly displaced individuals.

On 29 October, Hurricane Melissa made landfall in eastern Cuba as a Category 3 storm, causing heavy rain, strong winds, and flooding. Authorities evacuated 600,000 people, reported 45,282 damaged homes, and extensive damage to infrastructure, schools, and health facilities. The Government did not report casualties, despite impacts across the country.

In December, UNHCR held its first pre-employment workshop for 50 refugees and asylum-seekers, designed to equip participants with skills to support their integration into the Cuban labour market, pending the implementation of new government regulations.

Regional Funding Overview

as of 30 November 2025



$53.4 million
UNHCR's financial requirements 2025

[1] Financial requirement for MCO Panama in 2025, including requirements for the operations and activities in its area of responsibility in Central America and the Caribbean.
[2] The percentage funded is indicative.

UNHCR RESPONSE

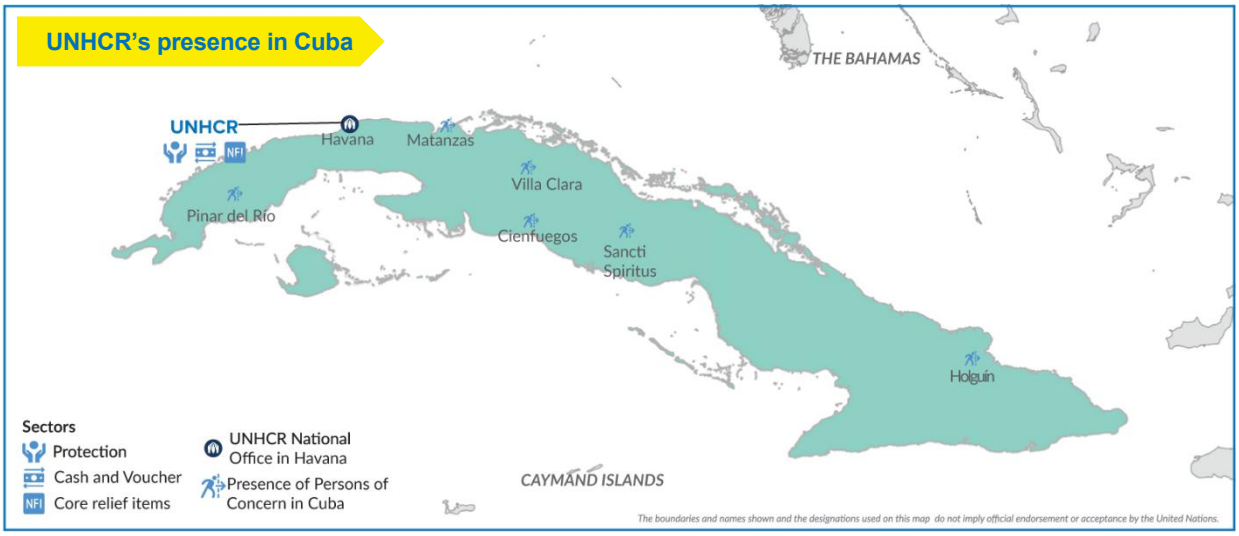
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is UNHCR's official counterpart in Cuba. UNHCR collaborates with the Ministries of Education, Public Health, Foreign Trade and International Collaboration, and the Cuban Red Cross. Several academic institutions, including the University of Havana and the Group of International Humanitarian Law Studies, disseminate information on International Refugee Law.

Advocacy | UNHCR promotes Cuba's accession to international refugee protection and statelessness instruments and the adoption of measures to improve access to rights and services. The Agency raises awareness by disseminating information on International Refugee Law and its principles to government, NGOs, and academia, promoting a refugee-sensitive culture. The Agency continues to engage in advocacy with authorities to support the issuance of work permits for individuals in need of international protection.

Protection | UNHCR responded to 262 queries through counselling sessions, guiding RSD procedures, durable solutions, and access to essential services, including healthcare and education. The office supported the resettlement of 20 refugees who travelled to Canada.

Direct Assistance to Cover Basic Needs | Due to a lack of legal status, many refugees and asylum-seekers cannot access employment or secure livelihoods and have limited income-generating alternatives. UNHCR conducts activities to ensure their safety and access to basic needs. From October to December, UNHCR provided monthly direct assistance to 80 people, meeting their basic needs and shelter.

Education and Training Opportunities | Thanks to verbal agreements with the Government, refugees and asylum-seekers can access free primary and secondary education. Ninety-three young refugees can access various levels of study, including university. The Agency also coordinated a Spanish course for 28 individuals.



UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | the European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | the Republic of Korea | The Kingdom of the Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | World Food Programme | Private donors in Italy, the Republic of Korea, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as well as and Australia for UNHCR, the Dutch Postcode Lottery, España con ACNUR, Japan for UNHCR, Sweden for UNHCR, UK for UNHCR and UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe.

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