FACT SHEET

Cuba

January-February 2023

Key Figures

160
Refugees and asylum-seekers from over **15 countries** are under UNHCR's mandate in Cuba.

50 per cent
lack legal status in the country, and **31 per cent** are women and children.

74
People in Cuba need resettlement. Most are from Western Sahara, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, and Yemen.

Context

Cuba is not a state party to international refugee instruments. UNHCR ensures refugees and asylum-seekers are protected against refoulement and granted access to essential services.

The country's ongoing socio-economic crisis limits local integration opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers. Resettlement is the only durable solution for most refugees.

In January, the US announced a new immigration policy to address irregular cross-border entries, particularly for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans. Each month, up to 30,000 individuals from these countries can apply for a parole programme to enter the US legally if they fulfil the requirements.

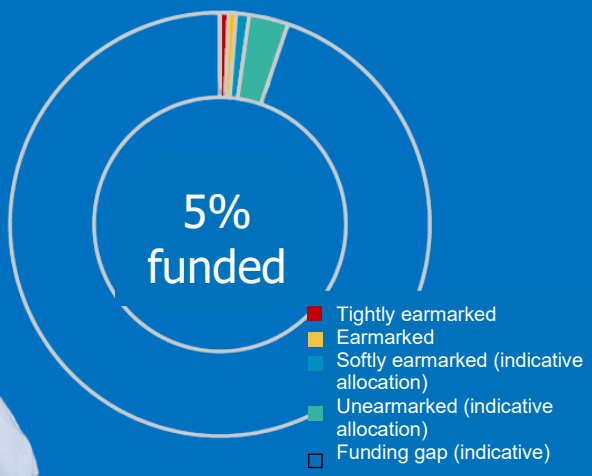
To date, some 10,000 Cubans have successfully used the parole programme to regularly enter that country, marking a decrease in the number of people attempting to enter through dangerous and irregular routes.

A considerable number of Haitian nationals started to arrive in Cuba irregularly. Most of them have been forcibly returned to their country of origin.

As of February 2023, UNHCR has assisted 174 refugees and asylum-seekers with multipurpose and shelter cash-based assistance to cover their basic needs.

Regional funding Overview

as of February 28th, 2023



$55.4 million
UNHCR's financial requirements 2023

[1] Financial requirement for the Panama MCO in 2023 including requirements for the operations and activities in **Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Curaçao, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Suriname,** and **Trinidad and Tobago.**
[2] The percentage funded is indicative.

UNHCR RESPONSE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the official counterpart of UNHCR in Cuba. UNHCR collaborates with the Ministry of Education, Public Health, Foreign Trade and International Collaboration, and the Cuban Red Cross. Several academic institutions, such as the University of Havana and the Group of International Humanitarian Law Studies collaborate to disseminate information related to 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. Moreover, UNHCR raises awareness of refugee issues by disseminating International Refugee Law and its principles among government institutions, NGOs, and academia, seeking to promote a refugee-sensitive culture.

Protection | UNHCR provides legal counselling to refugees and asylum-seekers on Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures and national regulations pertinent to their status and their protection in general, as well as durable solutions assessments and procedures, including resettlement. As of February, UNHCR has provided nearly 200 legal counselling sessions to people in need of international protection.

Cash-based Interventions and Assistance | Due to the lack of legal status, many refugees and asylum-seekers cannot access employment to secure livelihoods and have limited access to income-generating alternatives. UNHCR carries out activities to ensure safety and access to their basic needs. Since January, UNHCR has supported over 170 people with cash interventions.

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 89 young refugees, most of them from Western Sahara, have access to different study levels, including university. UNHCR provides complementary assistance to the government scholarships for Sahrawi refugee students to cover their basic needs.

UNHCR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

In 2022, category 3 hurricane Ian, caused extensive damage nationwide, significantly impacting on the national electric system. In Pinar del Río, UNHCR distributed over six tons of food, more than 20,000 solar lamps and some 150 tents to respond to the need of the people living in the most affected areas.

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

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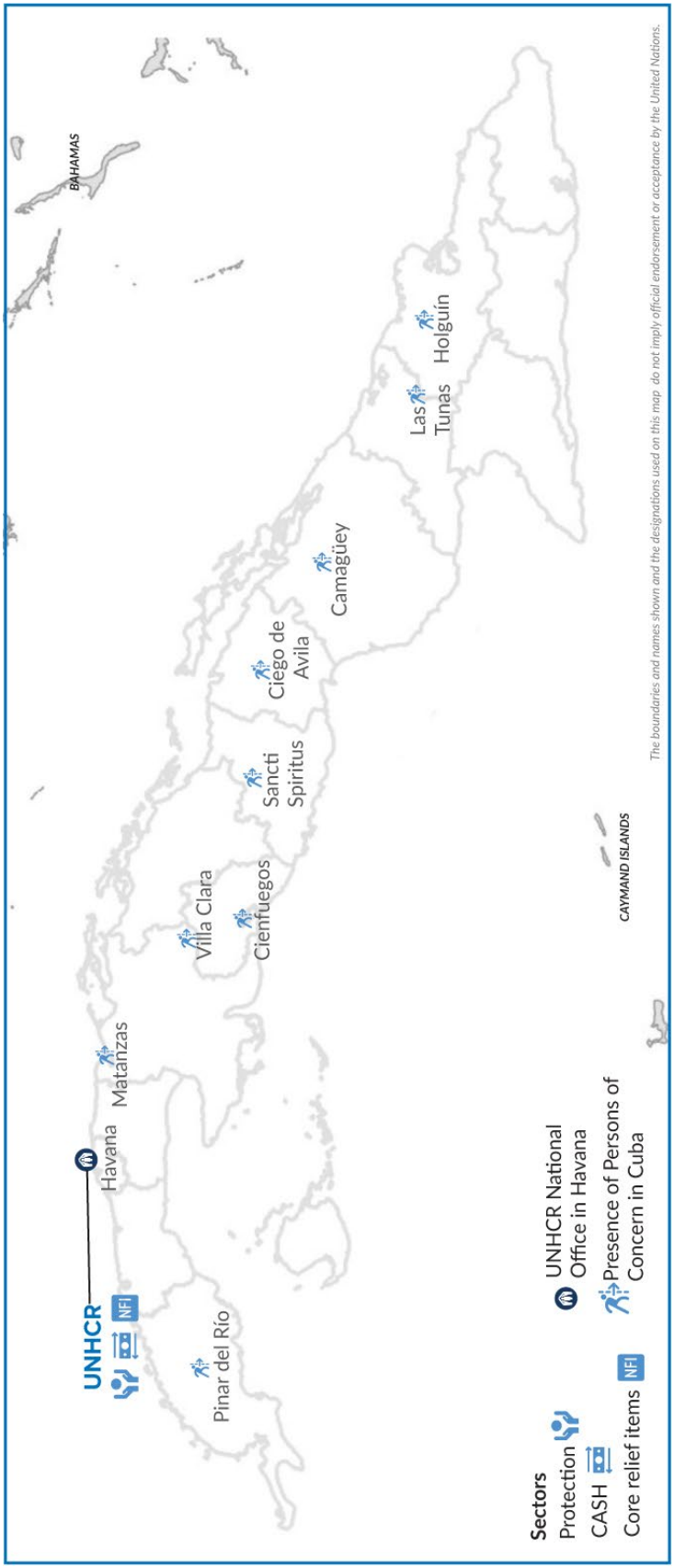
UNHCR's presence in Cuba