UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

FACT SHEET

Cuba

Sep - Oct 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 are **protected against *refoulement*** and that they have **access to healthcare** and **education** services. As local integration opportunities are limited, **most refugees are in need of resettlement** as their only possible durable solution. However, resettlement opportunities are scarce.

Vulnerabilities of asylum-seekers and refugees have further 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

201 refugees and asylum seekers under UNHCR's mandate (as of 31 October 2022)

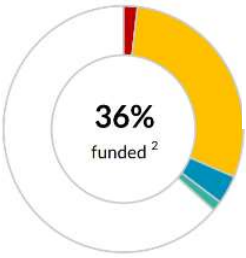
51 per cent of refugees do not have a migratory status granted by the government; 23 per cent of them are women and children

66 people in need of resettlement

Main nationalities

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

STATE OF PLAY: FUNDING RECEIVED VS. FUNDING NEEDS (AS OF 25 OCTOBER 2022)



US$ 54.3 M

UNHCR´s financial requirements 2022[1]

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

[1] The financial requirements for the PanamaMCO include requirements for the Coronavirus Emergency and the Venezuela Situation. **Cuba** is part of the PanamaMulti-Country Office since 2021 along with Panama, Nicaragua, Belize and the Southern Caribbean.

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

CONTEXT

With governmental consent, UNHCR processes asylum claims under its mandate. While refugees can access free healthcare and education services, refugees and asylum-seekers are not allowed to engage in income-generating activities, which makes them fully dependent on UNHCR assistance.

During the economic crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, their socio-economic situation has 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 COVID-19 vaccination programme, on equal footing as nationals.

UNHCR continues to participate 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.

UNHCR supports people and areas affected by category 3 Hurricane Ian

UNHCR participated with other agencies of the United Nations system in the country in assessing the damages caused by Category 3 Hurricane Ian. UNHCR has imported 23,400 solar lamps and 180 tents for damnified people.

Photo courtesy of IOM Cuba

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. Moreover, 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 continues to promote 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 on refugee issues** through the ongoing dissemination of International Refugee Law and its principles among government institutions, NGOs, and the academia, seeking to promote a refugee-sensitive culture.

Protection |

UNHCR **provides international protection** to vulnerable groups, including the refugee status determination (RSD) under mandate and the search for durable solutions. In this sense, 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 lack of a defined legal status, in Cuba many refugees and asylum seekers cannot access employment, secure livelihoods, and have limited income-generating alternatives. Thus, UNHCR **carries out activities aimed at ensuring safety and access to basic needs** for persons of concern. 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 **100 young refugees**, most of them from Western Sahara, have **access to university studies**. UNHCR provides a small complementary assistance to the government scholarships for refugee students in a vulnerable situation 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 affected by category 3 Hurricane Ian. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, and in collaboration with the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and the UN 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: Australia | Austria | Belgium | Denmark | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom. Private donors in Australia | Canada | Germany | Italy | Japan | the Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden| and the United States.

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