

# Cuba

May - June 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 **access healthcare** and **education** services.

Local integration opportunities are limited, and **most refugees are in need of resettlement** as their only durable solution. Resettlement opportunities are also limited.

**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.

## Population of concern

**201** refugees under UNHCR's mandate  
(as of 30 June 2022)

**51%** of refugees do not have a migratory status granted by the government. Of these, **22 per cent** of them are women and children

**87** people in need of resettlement

## Main nationalities

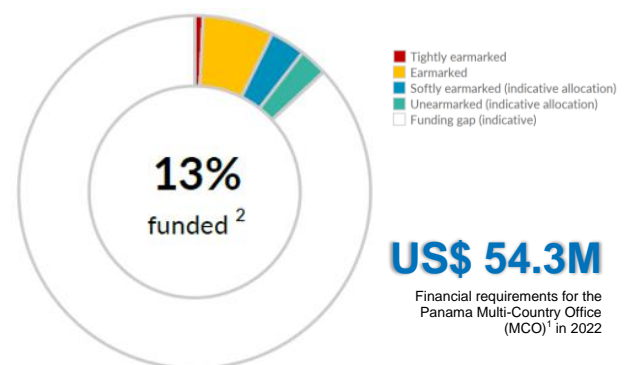
Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Iran, Sudan

## CONTEXT

With governmental consent, UNHCR processes asylum claims under its mandate. **While refugees can access free healthcare and education services**, all those who arrived with tourist visas are not granted a migratory status and cannot engage in income-generating activities, making them fully dependant on UNHCR assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic worsen their socio-economic situation, with difficulties to access food, hygiene items, and medicines. As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, the government granted **refugees and asylum-seekers access to the governmental rationing system and the national COVID-19 vaccination programme**, on equal footing as nationals.

UNHCR continues participating 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 5 JULY 2022)



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

<sup>2</sup> The percentage funded includes indicative allocations of softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions.




On World Refugee Day, UNHCR and UNICEF co-sponsored a cultural and recreational activity aimed to promote the interaction of Cuban and refugee children. The children visited two museums and a community center for teenagers in Old Havana, where they participated in various games, painting and other artistic performances.


The activity continued at the A+ Espacios Adolescentes Center, of the Historian of the City of Havana Office, where children and adults enjoyed the performance of the puppet project Polichinela de La Habana.


## Working with Partners


The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is UNHCR's official counterpart in Cuba. UNHCR also collaborates with the ministries of Education, Public Health, and Foreign Trade and International Collaboration, as well as 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

 **Advocacy** | UNHCR continues to promote Cuba's [accession to international refugee protection and statelessness legal instruments](#), as well as the adoption of measures to improve access to rights and services. UNHCR raises awareness of refugee issues through the ongoing [dissemination of International Refugee Law and principles](#) among government institutions, NGOs, and academia, seeking to promote a refugee-sensitive culture.

 **Protection** | UNHCR provides international protection to persons of concern, including through [Refugee Status Determination \(RSD\) under mandate and search for durable solutions](#). UNHCR provides legal counselling to refugees and asylum-seekers [on 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 Humanitarian Assistance** | Due to their lack of a defined status, [many refugees and asylum-seekers cannot access employment, and secure livelihoods, and have limited income-generating alternatives](#). UNHCR carries out activities aimed to ensure their safety and access to basic and urgent needs namely through [multipurpose cash and in-kind assistance](#) to support vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers cope with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Since January 2021, UNHCR has supported over 250 people](#).

 **Education** | Thanks to verbal agreements with the government, [refugees, and asylum-seekers have access to free primary and secondary education](#). Approximately [100 young refugees](#), the majority from Western Sahara, have access to university studies. UNHCR provides complementary assistance to the government scholarships for refugee students in a vulnerable situation to help cover their most basic needs while in Cuba.

UNHCR Panama MCO wishes to convey a special thank you to its donors: Canada, the European Union, France, 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 | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom. Private donors in Australia | Canada | Germany | Italy | Japan | Republic of Korea | Spain | and the United States

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