

CUBA

<http://www.operationworld.org/cuba>

Cuba lies 93 miles south of Florida. It is the largest island in the Caribbean and has a population of 11.2 million. Before Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution, Cuba was one of the most advanced and successful countries in Latin America. Since the revolution, most of the means of production are owned and run by the government and most of the labor force is employed by the state. As of July 2013 the average monthly wage was the equivalent of about US\$19 per month.

The Republic of Cuba is one of the world's last remaining Communist countries. The Cuban government has been accused of numerous human rights abuses including torture, arbitrary imprisonment, unfair trials, and executions. Human Rights Watch has stated that the government "represses nearly all forms of political dissent" and that "Cubans are systematically denied basic rights to free expression, association, assembly, privacy, movement, and due process of law". This month, President Obama met face to face with Raul Castro at the Summit of the Americas in Panama. Obama is seeking to restore full diplomatic relations with Cuba.

About half the population is Catholic. Around 9% are evangelicals. Persecution of Christians continues although not as severe as in the past. Harassment including occasional imprisonment of leaders makes following Jesus a sacrificial choice. According to Vicky Sterling who has been there on 4 mission trips, if you are a Christian and refuse to join the Communist Party you get the worst jobs, the worst housing and the least food.

Prayer needs:

1. The courage to live for Christ in the face of persecution from the government.
2. Leaders who are trained and capable of teaching God's word.
3. Vicky urges us to pray that the church will not become complacent if Cuba ever opens up to the US.
4. A team from East-West Ministries just left on a trip to Cuba yesterday. (Sat April 18) Pray for God to bless their outreach of the Gospel.