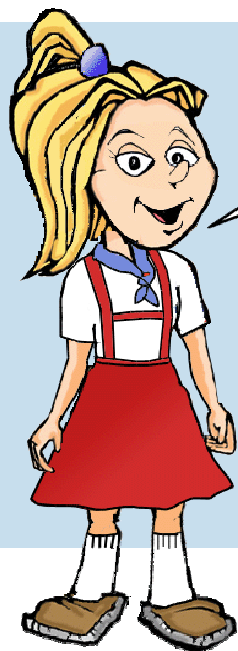


# CUBA



Hi! My name is Yamila and I am from Cuba. I have just finished a research assignment for class. We were asked to present different aspects of our country. I thought I would share my findings with you! Here they are!

The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency



Canadian International  
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de  
développement international



# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

As you can see from the map, my country is an island. Cuba is located north of the Caribbean Sea, and south of the Atlantic Ocean. Cuba is surrounded by the United States to the north, Mexico to the west, Haiti to the east, and Jamaica to the south. Many small archipelagos surround the main island of Cuba.

The surface area of my country is 110 860 km<sup>2</sup>. It measures 1,200 km from tip to tip, and it never surpasses 191 km in width. In comparison, I read that over there in Canada, Montreal and Ottawa are about 200 km from one another!

The capital and the biggest city in my country is called Havana. Other important cities are Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Holguín.

My country produces a lot of sugar, tobacco, tropical fruits, rum, cigars, and to a lesser extent, medicine destined for other South American countries.





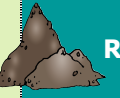
Surely you have heard about Cuban beaches! In fact, my country is renowned for its beaches. Tourism is an important source of revenue for my country.



## Did you know that?

Canadians make up almost 30 % of the tourist population in Cuba ? Similarly, statistics show that one Canadian out of 50 will enjoy the sunshine, beaches, culture, and pleasures that Cuba has to offer within their lifetime. Visit Cuba: What are you waiting for ?



	<b>Surface Area</b>	110 861 Km <sup>2</sup> (Canada : 9 984 670 km <sup>2</sup> )
	<b>Climate</b>	Tropical : Rainy season lasts from May to October. It is during this time that many tornadoes hit the island
	<b>Temperature</b>	From 20°C in January to 27°C in July
	<b>Relief</b>	The country is generally made up of plains. Four mountain ranges exist. The highest is the Sierra Maestra in the east
	<b>Natural Resources</b>	Oranges, jute, sugar cane, grapefruit, cocoa, beef, nickel, etc.

# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

# Population

More than 11 million people live in my country. More than 2 million people live in Havana, the capital city! There are also more than a million Cubans that have emigrated from Cuba. They live primarily in the United States.

If you visit my country one day, you will find a lot of racial diversity. For a long time, my country was a Spanish colony (from 1492 to 1902). Not surprisingly, more than 60% of Cubans are of Spanish descent. The descendants of black slaves brought to the island over 300 years ago make up more than 10% of the population. Lastly, much like throughout the rest of Latin America, there is a significant percentage of the population that is mixed-race. In Cuba they make up more than 20% of the population. A person of mixed-race is someone whose parents are from different races.

You will also notice some of our main characteristics, such as our friendliness, our openness, and our warm hospitality, as well as our ability to remain happy and good tempered.



# Population

## Did you know that?

Cuba's political system allows everyone to attend school from primary school up to university - for free ! Few countries in the world offer such opportunities !

We also have easy access to our health care system. Our health care system is completely free. It is considered one of the best in the world ! Many of our doctors are sent to other countries to give medical care...

Well, here are a few words in Spanish and their pronunciations. This way you can greet people if you ever come to Cuba.

**Hello : Buenos dias**  
(boo-eh-nose dee-as)

**Good evening : Buenas noches**  
(boo-eh-nas not-cheys)

**How are you doing? : Como esta?**  
(Coh-moh es-tah)

**Thank you : Gracias**  
(Grah-see-as)

## Facts at a Glance



**Number of Inhabitants**

**11,3 million**  
(2005)



**Density (number of people per Km<sup>2</sup>)**

**102 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>**  
(2005)



**Life Expectancy**

**78** (2004)



**Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>**

**US\$3,250** (2004)



**People Without a job**

**2 %** (2005)



**People who can read and write**

**99%**  
(2000-2004)



**Mortality rate under 5 years of age**

**7 per 1000 children**  
(2004)  
(less than that of the United States)



**Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>2</sup>**

**52<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries**  
(2003)



**Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup>**

**1,4** (2001)

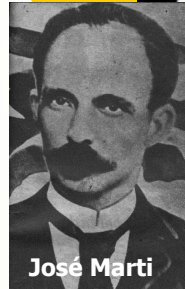
# History

Let me briefly tell you the history of my country.

As you may already know, Cuba was discovered by the explorer Christopher Columbus in 1492. He claimed the island in the name of Spain. However, at this time, like in the rest of the Americas, there were already people living there. The name the first inhabitants gave the island was *Cubanascan*. Sadly, the arrival of the Europeans caused the disappearance of the Aborigines in only a few years.

Under the leadership of their national hero José Martí, the Cuban people finally gained their independence from Spain in 1902 after a long war. However, the United States rapidly took indirect control over our country. They installed a regime that was favorable to their economic and political interests. The regime, however, turned out to be unjust towards the great majority of Cuban citizens.

What we call the Cuban Revolution started in 1959. It is a significant event in our history.



José Martí



Christopher Columbus



Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro

This revolution radically changed our society. A group of Cuban revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara ousted the dictator Batista after a 3 year struggle. They introduced a new political and economic regime: communism.

This system (which remains in place to this day) allowed Cubans to regain ownership of their land and to have free access to health care and education. Our system implies full participation by the Cuban people. These days, an economic embargo by the United States greatly impedes my country's development. This embargo is condemned every year by almost the whole world.

# History



# Culture

Cuban culture is known all over the world. Types of music and dance such as *son*, *mambo*, *cha-cha* and *salsa* are from Cuba. Perhaps you know of them already?

I don't know if you have ever heard of Cuban cigars? They are famous around the world! Old American cars from before the revolution are also part of the Cuban landscape. Equally, the iconic revolutionary Che (Ernesto Guevara) is associated with Cuba, even though he was born and raised in Argentina.

A well-know dish in Cuba is *Comida criolla*. It is a dinner based on rice, chicken, salad, and beans. It's delicious!

We have the right to practice any religion we want. *Santería* (the path of the saints) is a mix of Catholic and African (Yoruba) rituals that is practiced by many people in Cuba. About 25 % of the population is Catholic.



## Did you know that?

Havana, our capital, was the final stop for Spanish ships before they continued back to Europe laden with gold and other precious materials.

Old Havana is the historic centre of the capital and it leaves tourists that visit awestruck. It is listed on UNESCO's *World Heritage List*. My father told me that cultural inheritance is heritage from the past that we enjoy today, and that we pass on to generations to come. We must take care of it. Sadly, we lack the money to restore all the buildings in Old Havana.

There is a website where you can find lots of information on Cuban culture. Here is the address : [www.cubaheritage.com](http://www.cubaheritage.com)

If you want to hear Cuba's national anthem, click on the following link :

[www.david.national-anthems.net/cu.htm](http://www.david.national-anthems.net/cu.htm)

# Culture



Hurricane over Cuba 1998



# Challenges

People in my country face many challenges. I'll discuss a few with you here:

From June until November, my country experiences a Hurricane season. On average, Cuba must brave at least one hurricane a year. Has your country ever been hit by a hurricane? In the picture to the left, you can see Hurricane Dennis which hit Cuba full force in 1998 and did a lot of damage. See how it covers almost the whole country!

Some regions in Cuba are also affected by drought, lack of water, deforestation, and occasional epidemics. Sometimes, we lack fuel to run our agricultural machinery and this impacts our crops.

On the economic side of things, my father told me that the embargo imposed and maintained by the United States since 1961 has limited our economic trade, and stops us from selling our products to many other countries. This embargo causes a shortage of supplies such as gas, meat, cars, medication, soap etc.

Faced with this sad situation, and to assure that people's basic needs are met, our government has instituted a ration system. With the help of the ration system, my family receives a basket of food and basic goods. Because salaries are extremely low, sometimes we find it difficult to buy what we need.

Finally, a lack of housing, a high divorce rate, alcoholism, and prostitution are all challenges in my country.

Despite these difficulties my people are full of spirit, and are warm and welcoming. I hope you will visit us one day.

# Challenges

# Solutions



My country sends many workers and thousands of doctors abroad but benefits equally from international cooperation. Here is a very interesting example of such international cooperation!

The Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières, in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has been cooperating with some organizations in my country to create and implement environmental, education, and public health projects. It is amazing to see what they have been able to accomplish!

The Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières in partnership with an organization named *Cuba Solar* have been able to bring electricity to dozens of rural schools, community centres, and medical clinics through the installation of solar panels.

The positive impacts of these solar panels on the local communities are enormous. Thanks to this environmentally-friendly system, people can enjoy electricity! Imagine the importance for a rural community of being able to listen to a radio so as to communicate with the outside world, to keep medication or food cold, or to gain knowledge via a television.

Look carefully at the pictures illustrating some of the impacts of this Canadian cooperation project.

I learned that this project reduces **rural-urban migration**, that is to say the number of people living in the countryside that leave to live in a city. It also contributes to the health of the community and reduces alcoholism.

Lastly, did you know that you can also work towards a better world? By consuming energy in a responsible manner, adopting environmentally sound habits in your day-to-day life, and asking the leaders in your country to adopt forms of energy that are cleaner, you will contribute to the well-being of the planet!

# Solutions



# Glossary

**Communism :**

Social, economic, and political system founded on collective ownership of the means of production and the suppression of social classes.

**Embargo :**

An administrative measure, means of political pressure that restricts the export of merchandise, and the free trade of many goods.

**Renewable Energy :**

Forms of energy that are potentially inexhaustible. Nature can replenish these forms of energy relatively quickly. Conversely, gas, coal, and petroleum reserves are created over millions of years, and are limited. Solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal, and biomass energy are the most common forms of renewable energy.

**Rural-Urban Migration :**

Movement of peoples from rural areas (countryside) to the urban areas (cities and surroundings).

**Shortage:**

Lack of resources, less than what is required by a group.

**Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>:**

The capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

**Human Development Index <sup>2</sup> :**

The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

**Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup> :**

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.



Don't forget that THERE IS something you can do to make this world a better place! You and your classmates can get involved. Become aware of the important issues around the world. All together, we can change things for the better!

**To learn more about Cuba, check out the following web sites:**

- ✓ [www.in-terre-actif.com/english](http://www.in-terre-actif.com/english)
- ✓ [www.ethiquette.ca](http://www.ethiquette.ca)
- ✓ [www.equiterre.org/en](http://www.equiterre.org/en)
- ✓ [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- ✓ [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone)

# Glossary



# Solar Energy

The geographical situation of our country gives us the chance to enjoy the warmth of the sun all year long. Since we do not have enough oil to meet the electricity requirements for all Cubans, we thought: "Since we have so much sun, why not use it to produce electricity?"

As its name indicates, solar energy comes from the sun. Panels made up of several cells constitute the main body of the power system. Each cell is made up of many particles so small that they cannot be seen with the naked eye and when the sun reaches these cells, the particles are put in motion. This movement is called electrical current. The stronger the sun hits the cell, the stronger the current will be. Several cells must be connected together to obtain the power desired (e.g., for a refrigerator, radio, light bulb, toaster, etc.).

Thanks to solar energy, it is also possible to provide water to our villages! The solar panels are connected to a solar water pump. Water is then extracted and stored in tanks which ensures running water for entire villages! We can even create power stations or power each house with its own solar power system.



## DID YOU KNOW THAT ?

Each day, the sun provides as much energy as the total amount made by all the oil reserves in the world joined together!

## Your own solar power system

Here is an example of the uses that we Cubans make of solar energy:

On the following pages you will find items to be coloured and cut out. Fold the cut-outs as indicated and glue them on a cardboard. You will have made up your own solar power system and you will be able to better understand the uses that we make of the sun.

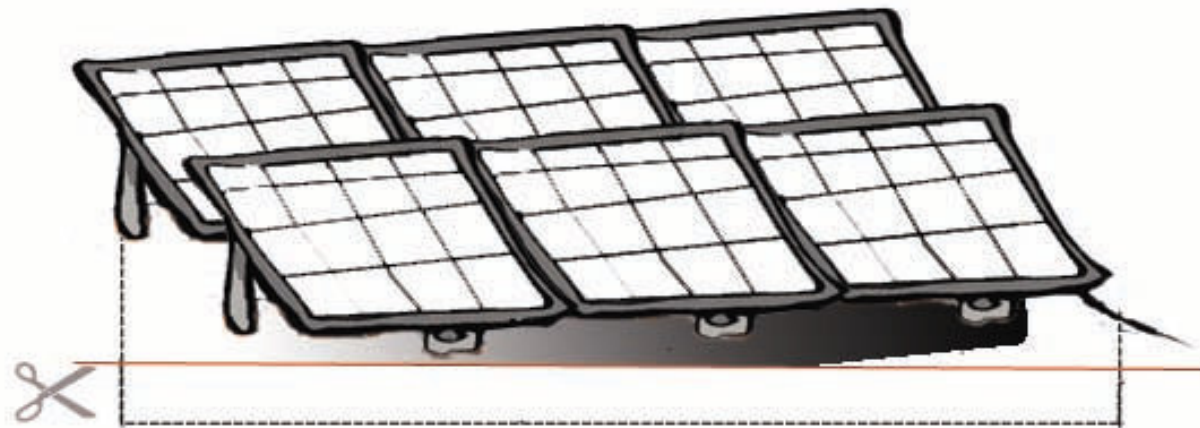
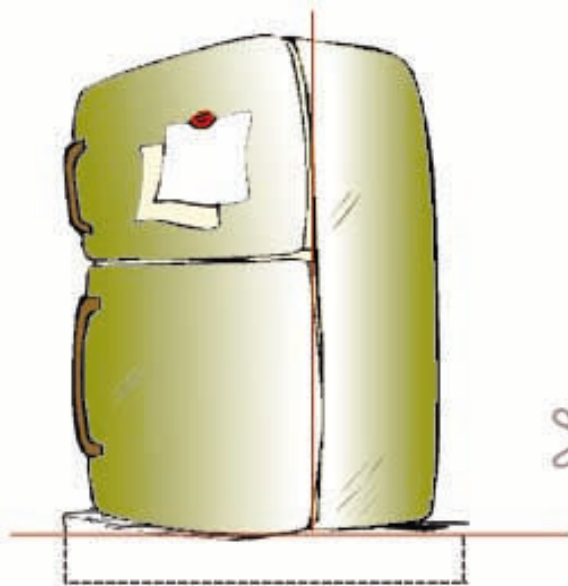
It is difficult to meet the electricity requirements of villages located in remote areas . To help those Cubans living in rural and mountainous areas, thousands of solar panels were installed throughout the country.

Most in need of electrical power are medical clinics and recreation centers. Medical clinics need electricity to keep the medicine refrigerated and to provide light after the sun goes down. Solar energy also powers the emergency radio in case we need to call an ambulance or other emergency services.

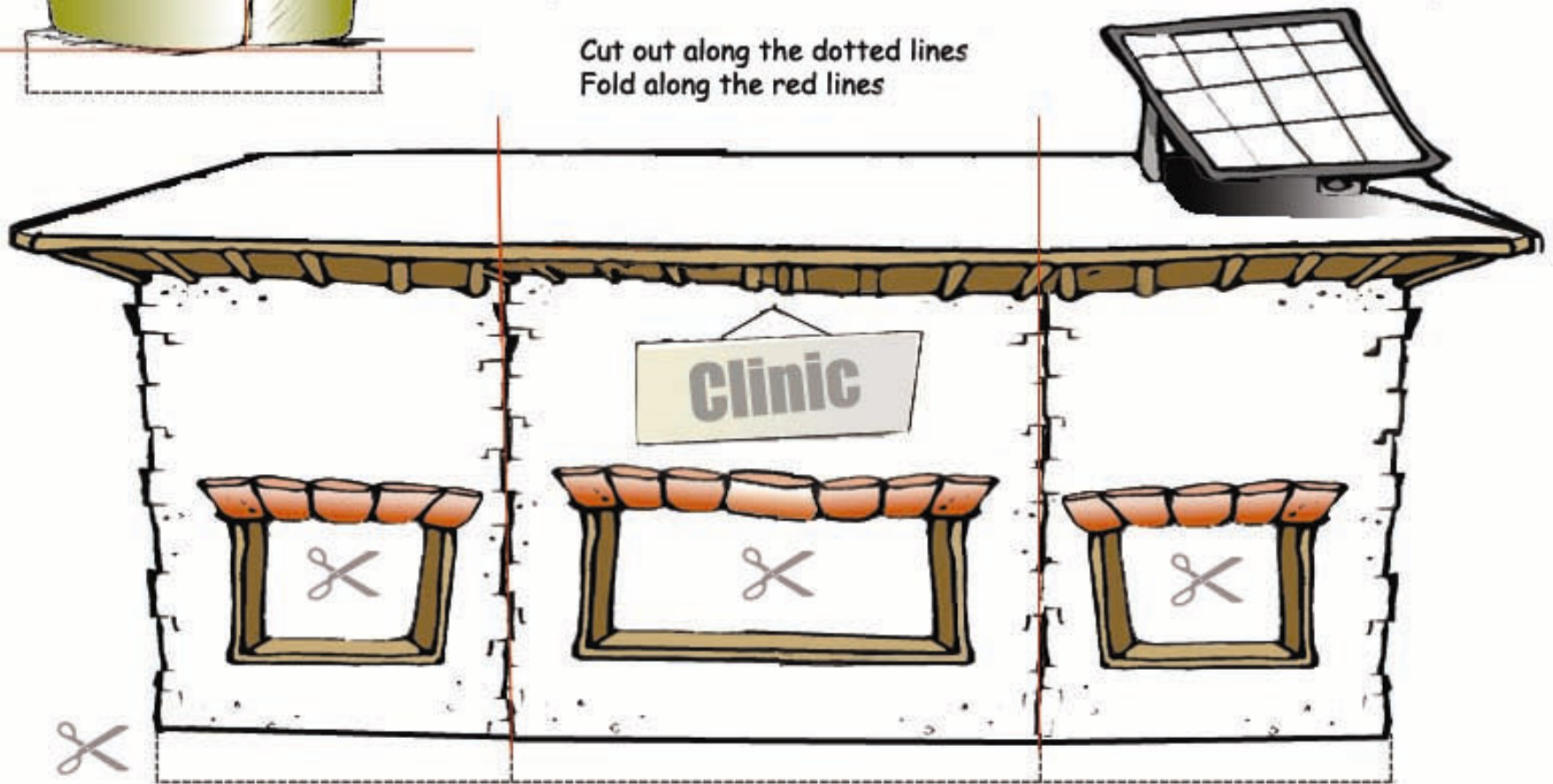
Recreation centers, equipped with lights, a television set and radio receptors, are a healthy source of entertainment for the villagers.

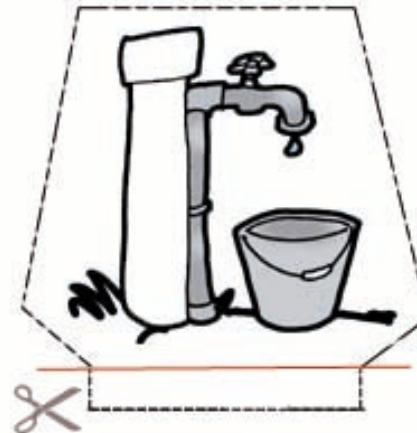
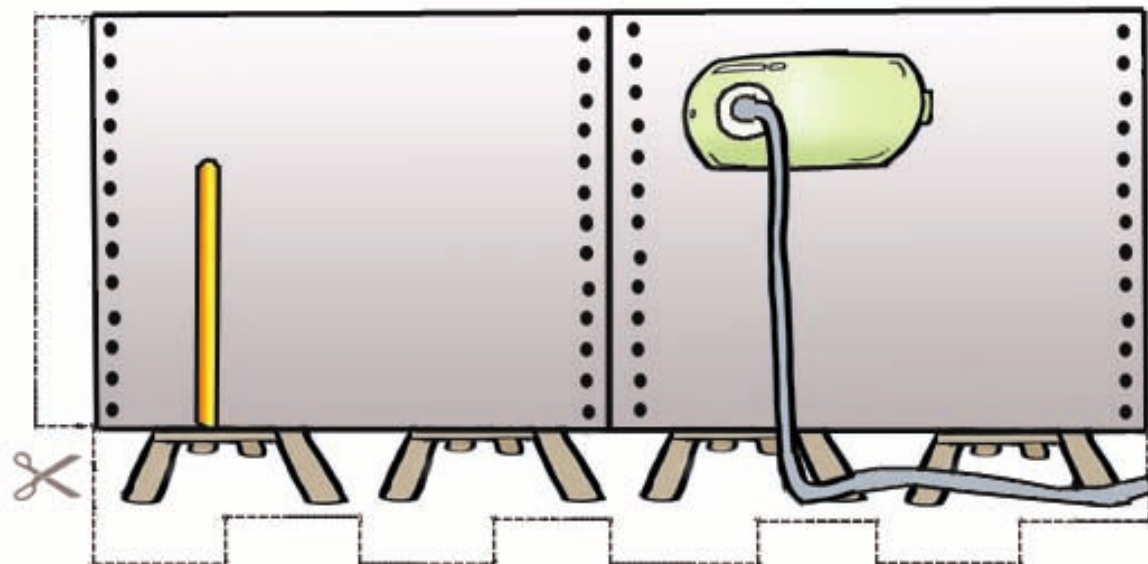
Solar pumps that are connected to solar panels extract water from the ground, providing drinking water to all the villagers and to the clinics as well.

# Game



Cut out along the dotted lines  
Fold along the red lines





Cut along the dotted lines  
Fold along the red lines

