

# *Cuba maintained child vaccination, even in the midst of the pandemic*

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By María Josefina Arce

During the COVID-19 pandemic, international organizations warned about the need to keep vaccinating children against other diseases. Now a report by UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund, reveals that the world has lost more than a decade of progress in this field just in the time of the health emergency.

The document points out that in 2022, for example, the number of measles cases was more than double the previous year's total, while the number of children paralyzed by polio increased by 16%.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there was a major setback in immunization. According to the report, more than two million children were left unprotected against vaccine-preventable diseases.

In the midst of this panorama, Cuba stands out, which maintained its immunization campaigns even in the most difficult moments due to the pandemic and the reinforcement of the U.S. blockade.

It adopted the necessary measures to avoid the contagion of children, so that at a certain moment of higher incidence of the virus, it postponed for later in the same year the beginning of vaccination against preventable diseases.

The decision was necessary, since this health initiative requires the mobilization of many people and children, and the protection of all those involved is a priority.

From the 1960s, when the first National Vaccination Campaign was launched in the archipelago against polio, to the current combined vaccines, the Cuban population is currently one of the most protected against multiple pathologies.

As the Ministry of Public Health points out in its web page, the birth of the National Vaccination Program was an early bet on preventive medicine.

Completely free of charge, with universal access, integrated to the first level of health care and with a wide participation of mass organizations such as the Federation of Cuban Women, this program has achieved vaccination coverage of over 98% throughout the national territory.

Precisely this Monday, the second stage of immunization against polio began, which will last until next Saturday. There will be a catch-up period between May 2 and 6 for children who could not be vaccinated for various reasons.

For decades, Cuba has never left its children unprotected. It has been a great effort that has been maintained in times of great difficulties and severe economic restrictions.

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