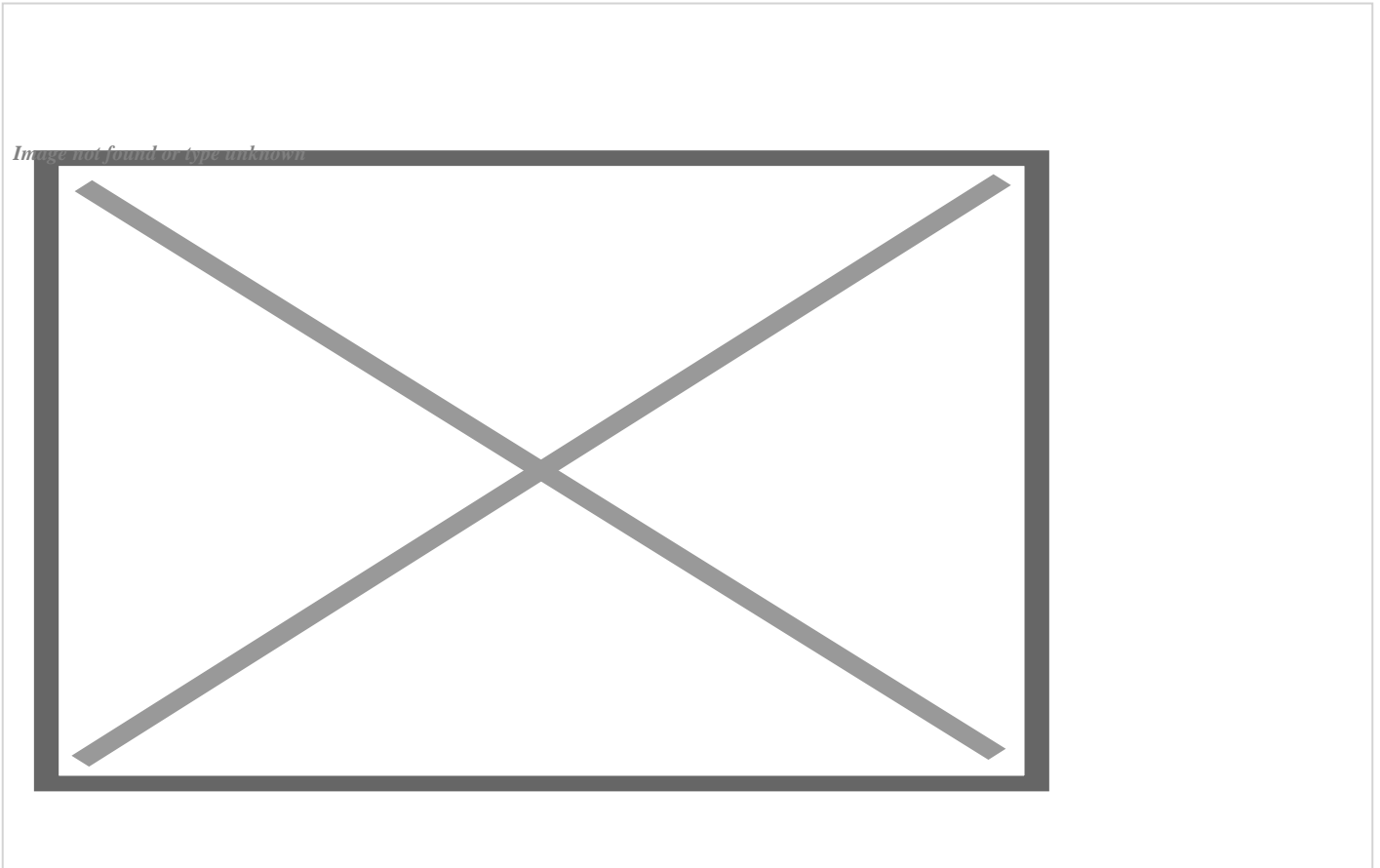


A valid option for working women



By María Josefina Arce

The National Program for the Advancement of Women, launched in Cuba two years ago, has among its actions, the creation of children's houses in work centers, which has been spreading throughout the country and has a great acceptance among working mothers and families.

This variant of educational attention to early childhood, in force since 1993, was taken up again by the authorities in view of the lack of capacity of children's circles and the high existing demand.

It enables the incorporation of women into the workforce and therefore, their empowerment, while for the labor center it means stability, efficiency and productivity of the workforce.

These institutions, exceptionally, also provide educational attention to children from families in the community with complex social situations.

Their operation is everyone's responsibility, since the work centers must guarantee the necessary resources for their maintenance and sustainability.

The Ministry of Education, for its part, is committed to the material basis of study, as well as to the care of children with educators and pedagogical assistants, graduated in the specialty of Early Childhood.

Therefore, the children who attend these facilities, which must have the required comfort conditions, receive the same educational program as those who attend the children's circles.

New economic actors such as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as production cooperatives, have also been involved in the implementation of these children's homes.

It also has the support of all the workers of the work center where it is created, who not only contribute in the rehabilitation of the area destined for this purpose, but also with donations of toys and other necessary elements.

The collaboration of the UN Children's Fund has been very important for the development of this initiative. UNICEF has provided various resources to several casitas, such as furniture for children and sanitary furniture.

This alternative has even reached the so-called Plan Turquino, Program of Attention to the Integral Development of the mountainous zones, an initiative of the historical leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, which has been in operation for more than 35 years.

Throughout the country, more than 100 children's homes are already in operation, benefiting nearly 3,000 children between 1 and 5 years of age. It is an option that is gaining more and more ground every day and represents a significant help for working mothers.

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