

*UNICEF always by Cuba's side*

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By María Josefina Arce

UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund, has supported Cuba for more than 60 years in its efforts to protect and achieve the integral development of that population segment, a support highlighted by President Miguel Díaz Canel in a meeting in Havana with the regional director of that UN agency for Latin America and the

Caribbean, Garry Conille.

This agency's assistance has been decisive and invaluable not only for various Cuban programs aimed at children, but also in the event of natural disasters.

The UN agency supports with donations of materials and supplies in the face of meteorological events, but also supports the preparation of the population, especially on how to provide socio-emotional support to children and young people in these contexts.

For example, in coordination with local authorities, UNICEF has collaborated in the recovery and care of children in the province of Pinar del Río, the territory most affected by the passage of Hurricane Ian through western Cuba in September 2022.

In fact, the UN Children's Fund supports a project of the Ministry of Education, which is developed in educational centers with the aim of preparing students and teachers for an inclusive management of multiple disaster risks and resilience to climate change.

Over the years, the international organization has constantly provided assistance to the Cuban health system in the face of the limitations imposed by the U.S. blockade, which was intensified during the COVID 19 pandemic.

In this regard, the Cuban Minister of Public Health, José Ángel Portal, has stressed that UNICEF has never left us alone and in the most complex periods it has been present, as it proved once again during the world health emergency.

Together with Japan and the Cuban authorities, it participated in an initiative to contribute to strengthening the technical capacities of health institutions and two science centers belonging to the BioCubaFarma business group and linked to the development of Cuban anti-virus vaccines.

This organization has also made a decisive contribution to the National Vaccination Program, which has been carried out annually in our country since the 1960s and has made it possible to eradicate several diseases and prevent others from becoming a health problem.

Its support is also present to maintain the progress made in the field of maternal and child health and in the operation of breast milk banks, an essential institution to ensure this vital food to the most vulnerable newborns.

Both Cuba and UNICEF have reiterated their commitment to continue collaborating for the well-being of the Cuban people, especially its children and youth.

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