

# *Cuba invigorates maternal and child care*

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**In recent years, Cuba has ranked among the 35 countries with the lowest infant mortality rate.**

By Roberto Morejón

Cuba has been among the 35 countries with the lowest infant mortality rate in recent years, but COVID-19 has left its mark on infants and pregnant women.

In the year just ended, infant mortality rose to 7.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, despite the dedication of scientists and health personnel, as well as the continuity of the care program for pregnant women, postpartum women and infants.

Until Cuba made progress in immunization with its own vaccines, the country had to respond to an accelerated increase in the number of sick people due to SARS-Cov-2.

The trend also affected population groups considered at risk, among them pediatric age groups and pregnant women.

In 2021, more than 6,000 pregnant and postpartum women were diagnosed with the respiratory disease and 93 of them died from associated complications, for a survival rate of 98.7 percent.

The number of sick children also grew to more than 176,000, with 189 deaths, for a survival rate of 99.9 percent.

This is not only an impact on Cuba, as infant mortality could increase by 42 percent daily worldwide due to the new coronavirus, two non-governmental organizations warned in December.

In any case, the referred indicator is a very sensitive issue for Cubans.

The experts offered a timely explanation to the public opinion on how during gestation, women undergo transformations that cause a decrease in the immune response and in the capacity of the respiratory system.

They informed that thanks to the vaccination, no deaths of pregnant women and postpartum women due to Covid-19 have been reported since last October, a protection also provided to children, since Cuba was the first country to deploy this prophylaxis in pediatric ages.

For the current year, the Ministry of Public Health adopts appropriate provisions in the control of preconceptional reproductive risk and encourages the promotion and education for the care and welfare of expectant mothers and their offspring.

Care for them in a differentiated manner according to their risks and keeping the Maternity Homes open represent lines of action.

Strengthening the primary health network as a crucial link in the maternal and child care service also stands out among Cuba's priorities, despite material limitations.

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