

Update on mediCuba-Europe's campaign "Syringes for Cuba"

Thanks to an unprecedented mobilisation of associations, organisations, solidarity groups, public bodies and private citizens in Switzerland and Europe, the fundraising campaign for the purchase of syringes and needles for the vaccination campaign in Cuba has achieved an incredible success in a very short period of time.

With the participation of the Swiss Embassy in Cuba (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - SDC), we have raised more than 600,000 Euros. And many fundraising campaigns are still underway in the participating countries.



Therefore, mediCuba-Europe has already made the first purchase of syringes and needles from a Chinese company, (already contracted by MINSAP), for a total of 485,650 euros which has allowed us to guarantee the delivery of 6 million syringes to Cuba. Some of the material is already in place, while a further delivery is expected in the next few weeks. With this first donation of syringes on behalf of mediCuba-Europe, at least 2 million

people will be vaccinated: whether 2 or 3 doses are administered will depend on the vaccine, i.e. on whether Soberana 02, Abdala or Soberana Plus is applied. This means that between 20-25% of the total Cuban population (11.2 million inhabitants) will benefit from this.

Many associations in Spain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Austria and Italy have contributed to this great success. In some of these countries, collections are still open and we are counting on raising more funds, which will be invested in additional needs communicated to us by MINSAP, including syringes and needles, but also medicines, which are currently the other priority of the Cuban health system.

In the meantime, in order to cope with the urgency of medicines, mediCuba-Europe has proceeded to purchase 3 antibiotics (ceftriaxone, vancomycin and cefazolin), which have already been delivered to Cuba, and has financed the raw materials for the production of essential medicines directly in Cuba (through the company "Laboratorios AICA" in Havana). We are also seeking to procure low molecular weight heparin, essential in the treatment of Covid, and next year we plan to finance a multi-year project for the direct production of heparin on the island, thus strengthening local capacities.

Another intervention of mediCuba-Europe, made possible by German solidarity, was aimed at the urgent purchase of filters/membranes for the purification and processing of liquids in the production of vaccines.

The activity of mediCuba-Europe ensures total support and collaboration with the Cuban health system, especially with the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) this is realised through donations and targeted emergency projects (as in the case of Covid19), but also with a focus on sustainable

interventions that allow Cuba to have the necessary resources for its mission of universal health for the entire population. Therefore, helping Cuba indirectly means supporting Cuban cooperation with other fragile countries with scarce economic resources, which through Cuban solidarity can receive support and aid for the health of their populations.

A big thank you to all those who participate in this campaign, solidarity with Cuba resists and does not stop!

We continue to receive your contributions to this great campaign in favour of Cuba in these difficult times: we will keep you informed of the activities carried out and new projects.

Thank you for your support!

Dr. Franco Cavalli – President



Details of the Euro account of the Common Fund of mediCuba-Europe where to send funds for the campaign:

IBAN: CH61 0900 0000 9104 0331 5 - SWIFT: POFICHBEXXX (Postfinance - Bern)

mediCuba-Europe - 6996 Miglieglia (Switzerland)

News from Cuba

This June, 15 months have passed since the first cases of SARS-CoV-2, the agent that causes Covid-19 were detected in Cuba. On 7 June 2021, the total number of people infected since March 2020 reached 150,103, while the total number of deaths due to Covid-19 reached 1025. Every day, the 23 molecular biology laboratories throughout the country carry out an average of 22,000 PCR tests. Just a year ago, Cuba had no more than 5 such laboratories with these capacities and was carrying out only a few hundred tests per day.

It is remarkable how Cuba, with its health system and its research and biotechnology institutes and companies, has responded to the pandemic. During the first wave of infections (first 5-6 months), the epidemiological situation in the country was under control, with around 80 infections and less than 5 deaths per day, mainly in the west of the island, with Havana as the epicentre.

From November 2020, with the opening of ports and airports, the country entered another phase related to the reopening of tourism and commercial flights. By the end of the year, an average of around 100 infections per day had been recorded. Nevertheless, the number of deaths remained low compared to the Caribbean region and South America.

There are some key factors, which explain why the health situation is no so alarming: the Cuban public health system, which was extensively reorganised with a preventive approach; the measures promoted by the central and provincial governments, which were adjusted according to

epidemiological data; the availability in Cuba of a set of allopathic and natural drugs and treatments of national production (85% of the anti-Covid-19 drugs applied in the protocols are of national production), which were dispensed to the population, prioritising the most vulnerable. But a substantial contribution has undoubtedly been made by the conglomerate of companies and scientific research institutes (more than 33 centres under the umbrella of BioCubaFarma - BCF) and universities which, under the direction of the central level of the State, have established procedures, protocols, controls, research and products that have transformed the country's biotechnology sector. The five Cuban vaccine candidates are an example of this. Of these five projects, Soberana 02, Soberana Plus and Abdala are the vaccines which, without having completed their respective studies, but with the scientific evidence and clinical results at hand, are allowing Cuba to gradually overcome the pandemic.

Because of the pandemic, with its territorial extension, duration and depth, the economic crisis has deepened, exacerbated by the dozens of new measures implemented by the US government in the Trump era and maintained so far by the Biden administration. A very serious problem in 2020 was the reduction to insignificant figures of international tourism in its entirety (10% compared to 2019), and fundamentally of the major tourist emitters: Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, among others. In addition, the Trump administration's anti-Cuban measures further restricted commercial transactions, supply markets (including health and food), financial transactions that prevent the local population from receiving foreign currency from abroad, and attempt to reduce foreign investment, etc. In short, a set of illegal measures that have consequences on the functioning of the State and the life of the population, and which add to the energy crisis that began in September 2019.

Despite this, the Cuban state continues its reform process as a result of the entry into force of the new Constitution of the Republic, validated by referendum two years ago. Stand out the new laws and regulations that aim to broaden and make more flexible the participation of foreign direct investment in major social and economic projects; the opening up of the private sector's participation in the economy (individual entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives, etc.); the strengthening of the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors; as well as the *Tarea Ordenamiento*, the biggest financial, commercial and economic-social reform of recent years; the elimination of the dual currency, the strengthening of the national currency or CUP, the reduction of subsidies, the increase in salaries and pensions and the opening of the labour market, which has allowed more than 100,000 people to find work in both the private and public sectors.

Cuba remains committed to immunising its entire population by the end of 2021. Not only in line with its historical principle of "health comes first", but also because Cuba knows that this is the surest way to advance in the much-needed economic reactivation. That is why, as of early June, 1.8 million people have received at least one dose of the candidate vaccines, and of this total, more than 700,000 have received the second dose and more than 160,000 have completed their vaccination schedule with all three doses.

Links:

<http://www.acn.cu/economia/80594-suspendida-temporalmente-la-aceptacion-de-depositos-bancarios-en-efectivo-de-dolares-de-los-ee-uu-anuncia-banco-central-de-cuba>

<http://www.acn.cu/salud/80249-indetenible-vacunacion-contra-la-covid-19-en-cuba-afirma-diaz-canel>

<http://www.granma.cu/mundo/2021-06-04/denuncia-cuba-sucias-maniobras-en-el-parlamento-europeo>