

Cuba boosts its immunization campaign with the support of Chinese vaccines

written by Alejandra Garcia
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The last Sundays of August are usually days of joy in Cuba due to the contagious

excitement of children returning to school and the hustle and bustle of parents to get uniforms, backpacks, notebooks, and snacks ready for the big day.

But this August 29, the reality was different. The island woke up to another six thousand people infected with COVID-19 and 77 deaths due to the disease.

Students did not go back to school this time, and neither did they after last year's summer vacations in many parts of the country. Today, it is riskier than ever.

However, it was not all bad news for Cubans at the end of August. On Sunday, Cienfuegos, one of the most affected provinces by the pandemic, began to be immunized against the deadly virus with a program that includes the using of Chinese vaccine Sinopharm and the Cuban Soberana Plus vaccine.

"Hope reaches the arms of the people of Cienfuegos" is the headline appearing in local outlets, alluding to the arrival in the territory of the donations made to the island by the Institute of Biological Products of Beijing, China.

"This immunization program has brought us relief after weeks of a hard fight against COVID-19 in the province, which is amid an uncertain epidemiological scenario," journalist Robert Alfonso Lara reported for 5 de Septiembre newspaper.

In seven out of the eight Cienfuegos' municipalities, hundreds of immunization centers were set up to immunize all the residents who are over 19 years old.

"We were waiting for this news with anxious anticipation. Everything was organized quickly by local authorities, medical staff, and social workers. If everything goes well, in the first days of October, almost 74 percent of our population will be immunized against the virus," said Oskeimy Rodríguez, a health official in the province.

For pharmaceutical scientist Dagmar García, this is not a clinical trial but a new

vaccination strategy to prompt people's immunity. This decision, which took place amid an unprecedented economic crisis caused by the US blockade against Cuba that includes placing impediments for the island to access materials needed to produce and deliver the vaccines, fills people with confidence.

The Chinese vaccine is the third most widely used immunogen worldwide. The decision to combine it with Soberana Plus resulted from weeks of research and reviews by the Cuban Ministry of Public Health which concluded that the efficacy of the vaccine combo is above 90%.

"Vaccines have no flag nor nationality when it comes to saving lives. We are going through the worst moment of the pandemic. This strategy will help us overcome the health crisis. That is why I'll give my arm to receive the Sinopharm doses," said Yerovia Tirse, a resident of the Cruces municipality.

The news came while the world faces an exponential increase in the number of infections caused by the Delta variant of Sars-coV-2.

Studies show that the new mutation, which has put in check the health systems of several countries in the region, including some states in the US, does not escape the immunity induced by the vaccines known in the world today.

However, "Delta decreases the effectiveness levels of these vaccines and causes many immunized people to become ill. This new strategy will show us what happens when we combine two immunizers. We believe that the response to infection will be more effective," Dagmar Garcia.

Since January 18, 2021, some 27,000 Cienfuegos students left school not to be back in September, something unprecedented in the province's history. Today classrooms are empty, but it will not be for long. The return to face-to-face education is just around the corner, thanks to Soberana and Sinopharm, which together may open a

new path to immunize millions of people around the world.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano](#)

