



## 50 years after an alliance for literacy in health. Cuba.

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### INTRODUCTION

In Cuba, the population's health is a governmental commitment legally manifested at the National Constitution and implemented through the Ministry of Public Health as a unique health system in an ongoing development guaranteeing the implementation of cross-cutting policies and the population involvement in order to provide without any distinction preventive, curative and rehabilitative care and health promotion to every patient.

After the Revolution in 1959 steps are taken to increase quality of life of the population providing them the means to quit ignorance of conformity acting consciously on health care and protection. This purpose attained its higher expression during the literacy campaign in which the population was not only taught how to write, but had an educative approach on prevention and control based acute health problems existing at that moment.

### OBJECTIVES

- To people to places where medical services are provided
- To construct latrines to put end to open-air fecal waste exposure
- To recognize main measures to prevent more frequent diseases.
- To recruit traditional midwives to be trained.
- To keep the house and surroundings clean.

#### How we did it

- Increasing the population health-related knowledge in order to reduce myths and practices being noxious of physical integration, specially in rural and remote areas. This was implemented to achieve our main goal: To declare Cuba free of illiteracy.
- A health card was drawn up to help young teachers and students to learn about health self-care and protection. The card provided phrases strengthening what has been learned motivating illiterates to take care of their health through slogans such as HYGIENE IS HEALTH, AGAINST PARASITISM, ANOTHER WAY TO WIN.
- Teachers were trained on how to use the card and develop their skills about the adoption of positive prevention of diseases-related behaviors and the use of latrines, shoes wearing, personal hygiene, tooth brushing, attendance to the doctor in case of pregnancy or any disease.
- Participation in the construction of latrines and its use given that in many cases it was used to store farming tools and animals up.
- The Rural Medical Service became an important reinforcement in teachers health-related educative tasks. This medical services acted as a support for literacy because for the first time farmers saw medical doctor in so remote areas.
- Coordination with other agencies operating in the areas, such as Agrarian Reform Institute, revolutionary militia and teachers in few existing rural schools was set up.



### CONCLUSIONS.

- The principal of the link between Health and Education made possible the success of this alliance demolishing in only one year for centuries of ignorance.
- The educative process of the population was not stopped, neither the purpose of increasing knowledge, practices and health-related attitudes of the population.
- Nowadays the level of instruction of the Cuban population has an average above pre-university studies.
- We can show our extraordinary achievements in public health and education thanks to the comprehensive culture of the Cuban population and its conscious involvement in health solving-problems.
- Today health literacy begins in early age through formal and informal education implemented by teachers, professors, educators and mass organization promoters, social communications tools included.
- Unique health system allows being in permanent contact with communities and based on a health diagnosis, educative objectives and learning needs detected to incorporate the educative component to each health action.