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Cuba: Correcting distortions also in the caring of vulnerable people and families

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One of the Cuban government's projections to correct distortions and re-boost the economy during 2024, such as making progress in the implementation of the principle of subsidizing people and not goods, requires updating the identification of families and citizens in vulnerable situations.

Although the above has been one of the many essential tasks that social workers have taken up, since Commander in Chief created that program 23 years ago, greater rigor, dynamism, adaptation to present hard times, as well as comprehensiveness are now imbued.

Consequently, expectations are to be exceeded. The same will occur with any doubts and uncertainty that may pop up after the implementation of these new measures announced by the nation's leadership.

Nonetheless, authorities reiterate that the rationing card for the distribution of the subsidized Family Household Goods will remain in

place and the principle that no one will be left abandoned. The increase in prices for goods and services, aside from the gradual nature of its implementation, selectivity, and in some fields or sectors, raise concerns in some fellow countrymen living under difficult conditions.

As stated by Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz, with the purpose of subsidizing people and not goods, a group of people are working on updating the costs of the subsidized Family Household Goods and the Reference Basket of Goods and Services, setting the prices of locally-produced food and the food imported, according to the Economic Plan for the current year.

Given that the social worker cannot individually achieve the expected results, the design and implementation of an entire system makes progress, with the involvement of 21 bodies and organizations, paired with the key role of the academy.

Therefore, correctly identifying those who are at an economic and social disadvantage involves analyzing their problems case-by-case, assessing not only that they have low income but also the home environment, while assessing the care provided to them by family members who are compelled to do so.

### **Minister of Labor and Social Security clarifies several concepts**

Vulnerable situations are usually linked to something, said recently on National Television Marta Elena Feitó Cabrera, minister of Labor and Social Security (MTSS), and confirmed that no individual is vulnerable by having three or more children, or being a senior citizen.

She also clarified that even though a person does not have adequate income, as long as there are people physically and mentally fit for work, this family nucleus will not be recipient of any protection. The best protection any individual may be granted, in any country worldwide, is precisely the opportunity to working as well as the study opportunity for young people.

According to the Minister, this facility —which is revised periodically— is provided to people unfit to work with no relatives able to help them out.

But we must characterize all those people, and before any increase in prices, these individuals will be protected. They will be all protected with the increase of the cash benefit of Social Assistance.

It is a procedure that is carried out automatically, from the Municipal Labor Directorates, so they do not have to go anywhere, she pointed out.

Regarding the young people who today abandon studies because they are the breadwinners of their homes, Feitó Cabrera explained that Social Assistance can protect them so that they continue their personal growth.

It would be unfortunate if a young man, because his family has insufficient income and feels that responsibility towards his family, stops growing as a human being.

By law, he can receive a benefit, a benefit during the entire time he is studying, she stated.

It can even be extended until after graduation when he or she goes to work and begin to collect his or her first months' pay, and then the aid is terminated.

The Minister reported that there is an ongoing updating on young people in this situation within the University Students Federation. It is worth it to them to continue studying. Once graduated, there will be employed in better jobs and hence collect much better payments, and they are going to be better professional, she noted.

On the other hand, given that the increase in prices could impact lower-income workers, she recalled that they would also be beneficiaries of Social Assistance, as long as it is proven and confirmed that they are insufficient to cover the Family Household Goods and the Reference Basket of Goods and Services, which includes food and basic complementary services such as gas, electricity, water and cooking fuel.

## **Prevention and social care, main missions of soul doctors**

Now that we must address a group of social inequalities that have been

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accentuated nationwide, prevention and social care are mandatory because they prevent expressions of this phenomenon from manifesting, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez —First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic— told deputies of the Parliament.

During a profound debate by the commissions for Attention to Local Bodies of Popular Power, and for Attention to Children, Youth and Women's Equality, it was said that the person in need has to feel accompanied, cared for, in a historical context that has brought new challenges such as emigration, when some families leave vulnerable people behind and alone.

The need to strengthen task forces of social workers at the district level was also discussed. This is a paramount link in prevention and social caring and they need to be trained to do so; and the fact of keeping human beings safe, it was stated, becomes everyone's responsibility.

In order to revitalize the programs and projects that benefit the most vulnerable in the communities, last September the Minister of MTSS announced that in the next two years, the country will increase the number of social workers from seven thousand to ten thousand.

As part of the State Budget corresponding to 2024, six thousand 513 million CUP are allocated for Social Assistance, a figure higher than that projected in the previous year. Of them, five thousand 913 million CUP will be allocated to local budgets.

The project allows the protection of 186,783 families and 339,754 beneficiaries in situations of economic vulnerability through temporary monetary benefits, social services and the delivery of vital goods to raise their life quality.

As work colleagues Angélica Paredes and Alina Perera state, prevention and social care is the sum of all the living forces of a community; and since it has to do with the soul of the people, it goes beyond a welfare approach. It transcends a checkbook to become a human urgency that is key within Cuban socialism.

Hence the imperative to correct distortions also in the care of vulnerable

people and families, and that in the event of any price increase or measure of economic and social impact, they feel the support and protection of an entire country.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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