

**WHAT IS
THE FMC?**





The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was established in 1960 with a membership of 70 000 women. At present, the FMC is a non-governmental organization with more than 3 200 000 members, i.e., 81 percent of the female population over 14 years of age.

Its actions and influence reach both rural and urban women: workers, students, homemakers, young as well as adult women.

It represents a fundamental force in the effort to enhance the ideological, political and cultural level of women, defending the full exercise of their rights, their opportunities and possibilities to participate in all aspects and level of society on an equal footing with men. Its duties include the systematic strengthening of the family unit and special attention to the development of the nation's most precious treasure: children, adolescents and youth.

The FMC channels the enthusiasm and actions of women in all the tasks require their efforts, based on their voluntary and selfless determination to serve the Revolution.

The FMC's structure and operation is based on the principles of democratic centralism. Its grass-roots organizations meet every other month to evaluate and program its work, and to study interesting cultural, political and social topics.

From the beginning of the revolutionary process, Cuban women expressed their wish to participate in and contribute to the consolidation, defense and progress of the Revolution. The FMC was founded in response to this growing revolutionary fervor and has since then become an indispensable tool for channelling women's valuable contribution to the building of socialism.

The FMC provides an efficient means for its members to discuss and pass on their concerns, interests, needs and views on local and national issues, questions relating to women's participation in society and, above all, to the advancement of the Revolution in the community or work place.

It has been a vitally important factor in attracting hundreds of thousands of women to socially useful jobs and making them permanent members of the country's active labour force, in systematically monitoring the indexes of women's participation in all occupational categories, and in seeing to the constant development of women workers as the possibilities of each work place allow.

The Federation works for the promotion of talented and professional-trained women to increasingly important positions in government and in the political leadership of the country.

From its very outset the FMC has channelled women's demands to participate actively in the defense of the nation and fostered their incorporation in the National Revolutionary Militia. It is now involved in organizing the Women's Voluntary Service and the Territorial Troops Militia, as well as in training all its members to guarantee their effective participation in the war of all the people.

The organization, together with the Ministry of Education, has fostered the systematic upgrading of women's academic level. The Federation was one of the protagonists in the 1961 literacy



campaign and in the strives to raise the general academic level of the population to the 6th grade by 1980 and to the 9th by 1985, emphasizing the need for women to prepare themselves to tackle and execute the responsibilities incumbent upon them in social production and in the bringing up of the new generations. At present the FMC is involved in attracting small groups of adult women who are still lagging in their academic training and instilling in younger members the conviction that they should make the most of the possibilities and opportunities of access to education open to them by the National Educational System, so that the new generation of women may actively participate in the scientific and technological revolution in our country.

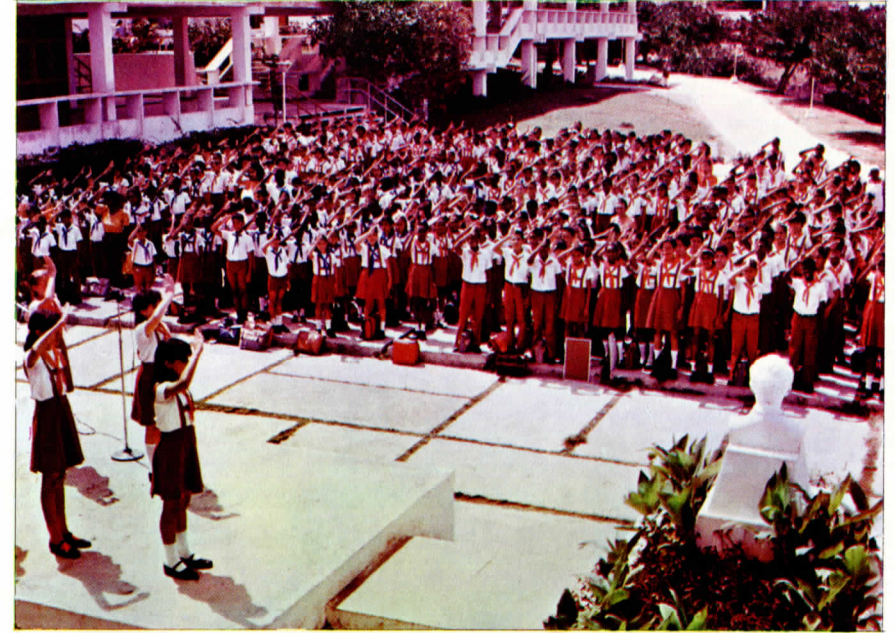
It directly promotes the education of the new generations in the principles of the Revolution and in all those aspects that will prepare them for life and bring them up as useful citizens in society.



In this sense, the grass-roots organizations of the FMC and the Mothers for Education Movement —with a membership of 1 442 575— help strengthen home-school-community relations and efficiently promote the pupils attendance and punctuality, individual and collective study sessions, the holding of extra-curricular activities and other tasks, related to the schools's educational functions.

The FMC consistently engages in social prevention work based on the activities of the Mothers for Education Movement, and the selfless cooperation of more than 20 000 voluntary social workers, who receive short systematic basic courses which enable them to help in the guidance of adolescents and youths with behavior problems, their families, and inmates and former inmates, with a view to reinstating them in society.

Since its inception, the organization has provided Cuban families with written materials required to educate and raise



their children. It gave special attention to the need of introducing sexual education which is indispensable to the comprehensive development of the individual and which had been inadequately dealt with due to traditional prejudice and backwardness.

The FMC's concern over the enormous sexual ignorance then prevailing caused it to organize the first Sexual Education courses in the 60s through health debates among the members of the Federation and later on through the establishment of a working group with representatives of the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and the Union of Young Communist in charge of drafting a family education plan in keeping with the needs of the population.

In 1977 the National Working Group on Sexual Education was set up as an interdisciplinary and multisectoral body attached to the National Assembly's Permanent Committee for Youth, Children and the Equal Rights of Women.

Among its priority tasks, the FMC promotes and supports women's participation in community health programs, especially in the rural areas, through the health brigades comprising some 58 000 women at present.

Health brigade members are the basic link with the polyclinic, the family doctor and the community. They carry out their work in urban and rural areas in connection with vaccination



and immunization, breast feeding, infant mortality, early detection of breast and cervix cancers, perinatal care, medical follow-up pregnancies, contagious diseases, nutrition, health education, sexual education, sanitation and the environment.

All these tasks are done on a voluntary basis, as a contribution to society, in line with the plans and programs drawn up by the FMC in close coordination with the Ministries of Education, Public Health and other State institutions, with a view to furthering the social and economic development of the country.

The FMC, as representative of the Cuban women, has participated and continues to participate in the drafting of all laws for the protection of women, *inter alia*, the Constitution, the Working Women's Maternity Law, the Family Code, the Labour Safety and Health Law and the Social Security Law. Through their organization, all Cuban women examine, discuss, and approve these bills, as well as others that concern all the population and submit their proposals for amendments, additions or deletions regarding any part of the content.

The Federation also works with the State central administration bodies in the establishment of services to facilitate the workers household chores and the care of children and the elderly during working hours, all within the country's economic possibilities.

The FMC systematically strives to create an awareness of common parental responsibility in raising, education and looking after the children, and of the need for household members to share in the domestic chores which unfairly burden women with a double work shift, when there is no such cooperation.

The FMC implements a scientific research and survey plan on the problems of women and the family, with the support of the relevant State bodies and organizations.

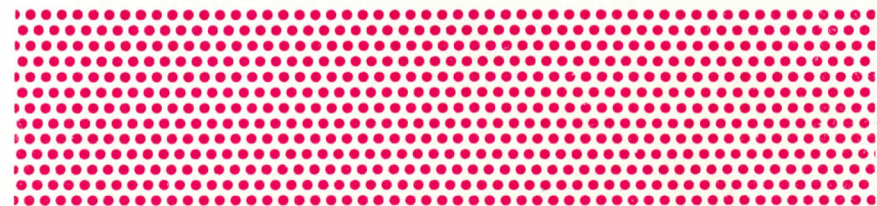
It also keeps abreast of the results of research projects carried out on this subject in the country.

The FMC has set up a Documentation and Information Center on women.

Internationally, the FMC has done an excellent job in maintaining broad relations with women's organizations in various countries, exchanging experiences and disseminating information on the achievements and realities of our Revolution. It has attained a prominent position in such international bodies and organizations as the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). It also participates in UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO, and other agencies activities in favor of women and children and has defended in all fora the aforementioned objectives, those stemming from the struggle for peace and the right of all peoples to a better life.

The organization has close ties with the revolutionary and progressive women's movement in all continents and carries out systematic activities, in solidarity with the women and peoples involved in the advancement of a just and peaceful world.

The FMC is a fundamental factor in the Revolution's struggle against the last vestiges of discrimination in our society. The struggle for the full exercise of women's equality in all fields and levels of Cuban social, political and economic life is a priority task of the Organization.



STRUCTURE AND OPERATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The Congress:

The Congress is the top leadership body of Federation of Cuban Women. The Congress meets every five years to evaluate the work accomplished and the role of women in the Revolution; sets down the guidelines and goals for the next period and elects the National Committee by a direct and secret ballot.

The National Committee:

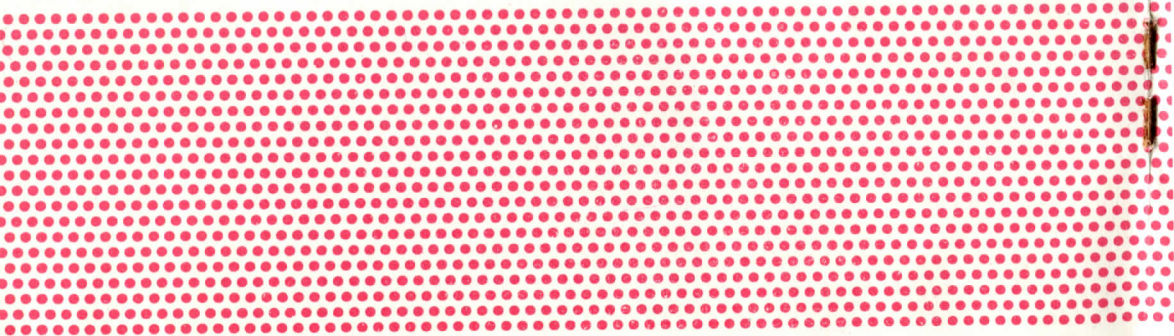
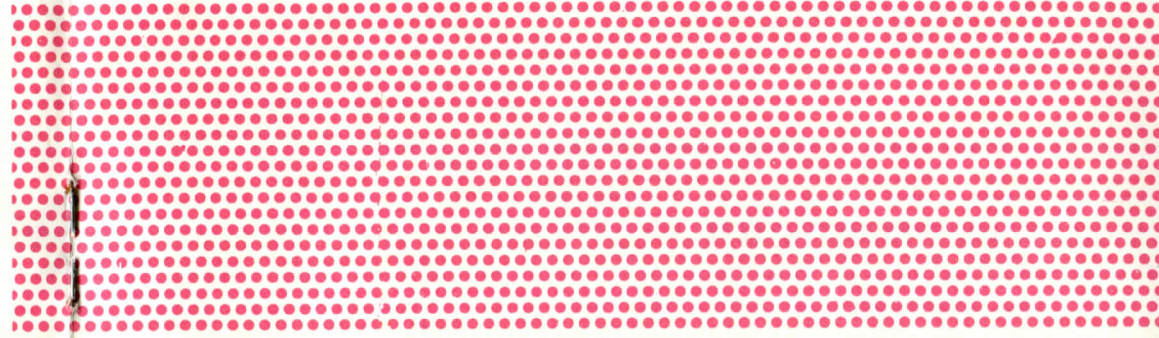
The National Committee is the highest hierarchical body of the Organization between Congresses and it is elected for five-year terms. It meets at least twice a year to evaluate and control the objectives agreed upon by the Congress, and draws up the necessary directives for its work.

The President:

The president is elected by the National Committee and is the maximum authority of the FMC throughout the country.

The Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected by the National Committee. It is headed by the President and a General Secretary. It directs and organizes the work of the Organization between the Plenary Meetings of the Committee, and coordinates and supervises ideological, organizational, educational, health, production, defense, international relations, research and other activities. It meets at least once a month.



The Auxiliary Body:

It operates under the Secretariat's control and is divided into Departments and Sections made up by officials who assist the Secretariat in its activities.

AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL**The Assembly:**

The Assembly is the highest provincial body of the FMC. It meets every five years immediately before the Congress to evaluate the work carried out since the last Assembly, decide on the goals for the next period, and elect the Committee and the Secretariat at the provincial level and the delegates to the Congress.

The Provincial Committee:

Between Assemblies the highest body of the FMC at this level is the Provincial Committee, which is in charge of carrying out the work of the Organization in the province. The number of members of the Committee is determined by its assembly pursuant to the rules established by the National Committee (the membership ranges between 49 and 71). The Provincial Committee meets at least twice a year.

The Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected by the Provincial Committee and between Plenary Meeting it is the body in charge of carrying out the tasks of the Organization at the provincial level. It is headed by a General Secretary and includes between 5 to 11 members. It meets at least twice a month.

AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL**The Assembly:**

The Assembly is the highest leadership body of the FMC in the municipality. It meets every five years, before the provincial assemblies, to evaluate the work carried out since the last assembly, establish the objectives for the coming period and elect the municipal committee and secretariat, the delegates to the provincial assembly and the nominees for delegates to the Congress.

The Municipal Committee:

The Municipal Committee is the highest body of the FMC at this level between assemblies. It is responsible for carrying out the different tasks of the Organization in the municipality. The number of members of the Committee is determined by the municipal assembly according to the rules established by the National Committee. The number of members may range between 15 and 51.

The Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected by the Municipal Committee between assemblies, and is in charge of carrying out the work of the Organization. It is headed by a General Secretary and made up by no more than 9 members. It meets at least twice month.

The Auxiliary Body:

It works directly under the Secretariat and assists it in its activities. It is divided into Departments and Sections and the number of officials is decided upon at each province.

The Auxiliary Body:

It works directly under the Secretariat and assists it in the fulfilment of its activities. The number of its officials depends on the membership of each municipality.

The Blocks:

Each Block groups a given number of delegations, ranging from two to twenty-five according to the territory they cover. There are more than 13 000 blocks throughout the country.

The Assembly:

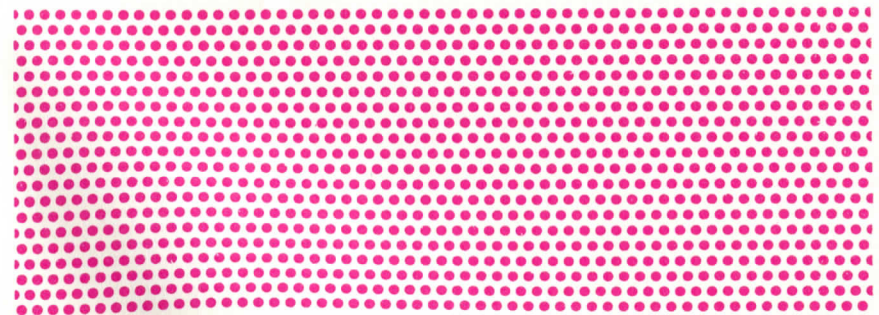
The Assembly is the highest body of the FMC at the block level; it meets once a year to analyze the work done and determine the objectives for the next period. When coinciding with the Congress, and prior to the high level Assembly, it also includes the election of the delegates to the municipal assembly and the nominees for delegates to the Congress.

The Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected by the Assembly and is made up by a General Secretary and four leadership cadre who have regular meetings between assemblies to direct, evaluate and control the work of the delegations in their territory.

The Delegations:

The delegation is the grassroots level of the FMC organizational structure, because it is precisely here where the Federation members are grouped. The minimum and maximum number of members in a delegation depends on the territory it covers.



The Delegation Assembly:

The Delegation Assembly is the grassroots body of the FMC, the members meet six times a year (every two months) to evaluate and organize their work, analyze the concrete problems in their area and discuss topics of interest to women.

Once a year, this body takes stock of its work and sets down the goals for the next stage.

During the preparations for the Congress, it proposes the delegates, to the Block Assemblies and the nominees for delegates to the Congress. Delegations not grouped in blocks elect the delegates to the municipal assemblies.

The Secretariat:

The Secretariat is elected by the Assembly and is made up by a General Secretary and four leaders. It meets frequently between assemblies to organize, direct and control their tasks.

There are over 68 000 delegations in the country, and their membership ranges between 16 and 100 members each.

In the 1987 ballots, 1 642 professional cadre (up to the municipal level) and 405 622 voluntary leaders were elected in the delegations and blocks.

