

## ABSTRACT

### Cuba's Health Policy towards CARICOM: The Cases of St. Lucia and Jamaica

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This study explored the use of Cuba's health cooperation policy to advance its foreign policy goals. The cases of St. Lucia and Jamaica reveal Cuba's intense cooperation program with CARICOM, and the impact of such an initiative on recipients. Geographically, Cuba is in the Caribbean and has remained committed to sharing its health resources with its neighbours, notwithstanding its historical outreach to more distant countries. Its regional engagement has increased its hemispheric influence. Cuba has gained the confidence of international bodies committed to promoting good health care globally, and has gradually emerged from the 50 year long isolation it suffered from some members of the international community. Cuba's health policy has contributed significantly to the human development of the region by helping it build stronger health systems which can meet the needs of a broader cross section of citizens. However, new domestic economic and systemic difficulties challenge Cuba's capacity to sustain this initiative, which developed during a period of extensive external support but is now challenged in a time of scarcity and requires adjustments. The study was viewed primarily through the interconnected framework of niche diplomacy which is a derivative of soft power, South-South Cooperation (SSC) and the levels of analysis method applied in comparative foreign policy analysis.

This study argues that the Caribbean region benefits significantly from Cuba's support as this contributes to their social, economic and human development, and helps them meet international development standards. The qualitative approach including the case study methodology was useful in exploring the deep meanings which Cuba's health policy has for stakeholders.

Keywords: Emlynn Victoria Francis; Cuba's health system; health cooperation; foreign policy; development; niche diplomacy; South-South Cooperation; CARICOM; St. Lucia; Jamaica.