

Distribution of Health Outcomes in Children Adolescents in Latin America, and the reduction of the equity gap

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Abstract

From the conclusions of a previous work with UNICEF¹, several vacant topics needed to be addressed, with special relevance for a research-to-action agenda. Among them: (1) in terms of health performance indicators, several countries reveal relatively better results than others with similar socio-economic parameters. Bolivia, Belize, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay stand out, each in its group, revealing the need for further study about the strategies implemented in each case, (2) in most of these cases, health interventions includes the definition of explicit guaranteed rights, established through interventions, selected tracers or indicators. In some cases, those programs were implemented through schemes of national health insurance schemes, while in others the intervention prioritized specific population groups, (3) however, health outcomes could not necessarily be attributed to these reforms/interventions: changes in macroeconomic variables (eg.: income policies) or social plans implemented independently (or not) of health reforms, may explain at least part of this phenomenon, (4) unfortunately, no systematic external evaluation mechanisms were implemented in order to identify the impact of sectoral initiatives, "controlling" by external interventions, limiting the identification of policy recommendations, (5) moreover, it is possible to infer that there are gaps between the law and its implementation, which increases the challenge of associating observed health outcomes with program effectiveness. This affects interpretation of health results, measuring the existing gaps between social groups, especially among children from families belonging to different income groups. Therefore the level of financial protection beyond the effective coverage must be proven. As a corollary, building a research agenda for the future requires a debate on health systems and services dedicated to children and adolescents, their link to social health determinants and policies. Under this argument, the objective of this study is to provide an equity perspective in the evolution of health indicators, answering the following question: Did those countries that managed to be successful in reducing its infant mortality indicators reduce the health equity gaps among social groups? Is it possible to identify specific policies implemented in this direction?

¹ Maceira, D. (2015) http://www.danielmaceira.com.ar/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Doc_t123.pdf