

Health municipality index: monitoring inequalities in health in Bolivia

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Abstract

Summary indexes are frequently used to identify the magnitude and evaluate changes in some conditions, social, economic and others. Those kinds of measures are more and more used in health conditions analysis, especially to determine inequalities. Using the health municipality index (HMI) to summarize the overall health conditions of a municipality, we tried to determine how deep are health inequalities among Bolivian municipalities and how that inequalities have changed between 2001 and 2005. HMI value is composed by ten indicators from different dimensions (socioeconomic, health status), which was calculated using data from National Institute of Statistics and the National Health Information System.

Results shows that in Bolivia there still are profound inequalities among municipalities and regions with different socioeconomic conditions, that influence health status and the poorest and the indigenous populations have the lowest values of HMI. Nevertheless the evolution of the index between 2001 and 2005 seems to have notable improvements, there was a rise in the median value of the index nationally and a sensible reduction of the municipalities of low and very low categories of the HMI.

On the other hand the gap between the highest and the lowest values of the index have been reduced in about 50%. That improvements have been shown for all regions of the country, but Potosí and Pando continues among the worst regions, according to the HMI, which also are two of the poorest departments of the country. Department of Chuquisaca had the major improvement of health conditions in the period.