

An Examination of the Process of Decentralisation of the Health Sector in Colombia

By

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SUMMARY OF

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Abstract

This study analyses the decentralisation of the health sector in Colombia. It explores the characteristics of Institutional Development (ID) and Community Participation (CP) as main components of decentralisation of the health sector and their relationship with the social and economic category of the municipalities; also the administrative and political issues that affect the implementation process at the municipal level. The study was carried out between 2001 and 2002. The analysis is framed in the context of health sector reform that seeks to improve the provision of health services. Decentralisation is understood as a public policy, which interacts strongly with the political, social, economic and administrative environment. It involves the municipalities strengthen their institutional capacity and develop effective mechanisms of community participation in order to manage the health sector. The research involved a survey of 91 municipalities using a quantitative approach. Also the analysis of three case studies, and the perspective of the regional and national decision-makers using a qualitative approach. The data from different sources and methods have been triangulated in order to provide an integrated analysis of the decentralisation process. The findings suggest that most municipalities have achieved a moderate level of progress in implementing decentralisation of the health sector. However, they do not have an integrated development of the main dimensions of ID and CP. The level of progress is not consistent with the category of municipality, which is highly related to the quality of the staff, the

patronage system, and the political will of the municipal, regional and national government.

Key words: decentralisation, health sector reform, institutional development, community participation.