



## **REGIONAL WORKSHOP: IMPROVING THE MEASUREMENT OF POVERTY IN THE AMERICAS: HEALTH ADJUSTED POVERTY LINES - HAPL**

**SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2003**

**PAHO Headquarters**

525 Twenty Third Street, N.W.

Room B (Second Floor)

Washington, D.C. 20037, USA

### **Background:**

The National Academy of Science of the United States working group on the measurement of poverty recommended that the existing measurements of poverty should be revamped to reflect a better measurement of family 'needs' and an improved measurement of family or household available 'resources' (to satisfy essential needs)<sup>1</sup>. The incorporation of multi dimensions of poverty was discussed at the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Expert Group on Poverty Statistics (Rio Group, October 15-17, 2001). The Rio Group welcome the idea of an in depth discussions on the ways in which health related aspects could be incorporated in the measurement of poverty.

The existence of a "vicious circle of poverty and disease" has been a central issue in the economic development literature. Despite the growing evidence on the relation between poverty and ill health, there is a lack of specificity about the way in which public health policies may contribute to the reduction of poverty. This issue is of importance particularly the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, where high levels of poverty and health inequities constitute a major obstacle to regional development.

### **Objective:**

The main objective of the Workshop was to discuss different ways and approaches for incorporating various dimensions of health into the measurement of poverty from a conceptual and a methodological point of view. The Workshop provided an opportunity to take stock on the progress being made in countries of the Americas in these topics. This was a contribution to the effort of the Expert Group on Poverty Statistics (Rio Group), to improve the quality and relevance of the measurement of poverty and the establishment of common procedures and best practices.

### **Participants:**

The Workshop included participants of the Expert Group on Poverty Statistics (Rio Group) and invited experts from national statistics offices and international organizations, academic and research institutes of the Americas and Great Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/img/povmeas/sum.pdf>

### Specific Topics:

The Workshop hosted presentations and discussions on different methods for improving the measurement of poverty in countries of the Americas. In particular, the workshop provided an opportunity to review the rationale and methods of best practice in including health and health care services related issues in the measuring of poverty. Specific issues addressed were:

- How to include in the measurements of poverty households and/or individual's health need, the consumption of health care services, or the benefits or costs of health care insurance services.
- How to define and estimate the minimum or adequate amount of health care expenditures needed to ensure a household minimum level of well being.
- How to adjust existing measurements of poverty to consider "nutritional losses" due to illness and diseases.
- How important health related catastrophic expenditures are in explaining the dynamics of poverty.

### Organization:

This was a joint activity organized by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Housing and Household Economic and Statistics Division (HHES) of the United States Census Bureau (USCB) in cooperation with the Statistical Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and The World Bank.

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