

Tulane and UNICEF report reveals health inequities in Latin America & Caribbean

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From UNICEF

Researchers at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine partnered with UNICEF to analyze health inequities in Latin America and the Caribbean. The goal of the [new report](#) is to inform policymaking in the region, which still has great strides to make in access to health care for all women, infants and children.

The researchers reviewed dozens of health surveys and reports on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in the 33 countries that make up Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has the highest percentage of adolescent births worldwide, as high as 27 percent of all births in some countries.

“That tells us a lot about gender inequities, lack of opportunities for young people, poor quality of education and gaps in access to contraceptives,” says lead author Dr. Arachu Castro, Samuel Z. Stone Chair of Public Health in Latin America.

Castro and her team found most of the differences in infant and under-five mortality as well as perinatal and neonatal care are related to the mother’s wealth and education, more so than whether she lived in a rural or urban setting. Differences in the use of health services in general, however, are associated with both wealth and education along with place of residence.

Data reviewed by the Tulane team showed that indigenous and Afro-descendant women and their children are less likely to utilize health care and have worse health outcomes. In addition to generalized social exclusion, increasing evidence points to the association of mistreatment in health care settings with the poor health outcomes of populations from ethnic minorities.

Castro hopes this report will be used as a tool to guide policymakers.

“The Health Equity Report 2016 emphasizes the importance of understanding who is left behind and why,” Castro says. “Thanks to the technical expertise of UNICEF and the analytical depth that we provide at Tulane, the report facilitates the development of policies aimed at improving health outcomes for all in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

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