



Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration: a comparative analysis of SADC and UNASUR health policies (PRARI)

Information Brief 1 – April 2014

Welcome to the first Information Brief of the *Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration* project. This project Information Brief is scheduled to be published five times over the duration of the project. Please send us your responses concerning the topic or any news items that have caught your interest. We will be delighted to hear from you.

What is this project about?

This research project is an exciting development in the study of world-regional governance, politics and policy. The growing presence and significance of multilateral regional organisations across diverse public policy fields has been the subject of substantial academic and policy research, but little is known about whether and how regional commitments on poverty reduction are being implemented in practice, or about what kinds of regional policy development processes are fostering the emergence of embedded pro-poor approaches.

With reference to Southern regionalisms in South America and Africa, our project examines whether and how regionalist policies and programmes of action are instituting an embedded *pro-poor* focus. Taking the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) as case studies, we are focusing on the regional integration-poverty nexus in relation to access to medicines and health care. We chose this focus for two reasons. First, poor health and poverty are mutually-reinforcing and tend to affect poor, border areas where there is scope for innovation in cross-border regional policy coordination. Second, health is emerging as a distinctive focus of attention for pro-poor policy making within regional integration. SADC and UNASUR have developed institutional competences in health policy and poverty reduction, although their policy development practices and methods take quite different forms. We investigate this in-depth in relation to SADC and UNASUR's policy development in relation to access to health care and to medicines. This will be supplemented through fieldwork in low-income SADC and UNASUR Member States.

Examining the contributions of Southern regionalist strategies and processes in the development of programmes of poverty reduction will enable us to contribute to contemporary debates about the place of health and poverty in contemporary multilateral governance, the potential of South-South dialogue and cooperation around poverty reduction goals, and the role of political and social actors within the regions and beyond in supporting the development of regional *pro-poor* health policies. In the midst of global negotiations over the 'post-2015' development agenda, and the rejuvenation of global social protection and health policy agendas, the questions and issues our project addresses could hardly be more timely.

You can read more about the project's aims and methods on our project website

<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari>

Who we are and what we're doing

We are a team of established researchers based at the Open University, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, the South African Institute of International Affairs, United Nations University Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies, and Southampton University. We are a multi-disciplinary team, bringing together specialist expertise linking

- social and health policy analysts concerned with health care system strengthening and social equity, with
- international integration specialists concerned with the socio-institutional foundations and consequences of regionalism and regionalisation processes, with
- the making of policy in spheres of cross-border governance and the ways they link with national social systems, with
- area studies specialists concerned with the politics, economies, societies and cultures of South America and Southern Africa in comparative perspective.

PRARI started in March 2014 and runs to the end of 2015. Having launched the project website in April, we are refining our research tools, developing our secondary analysis of the literature, and preparing for two stakeholder engagement workshops. One of these will be held in Buenos Aires and the other in Johannesburg. Bringing together a range of 'policy workers' of different kinds and perspectives, the workshops will 'road test' our research plan and engage in information sharing and dialogue about regional integration, health and poverty reduction. In summer 2014 we will be starting our fieldwork phase of the research.

We will be featuring interviews, resources and materials on our project website, so put a note in your diary to come back to our website over the coming weeks and months.

Collaboration, participation and dialogue

As a team of scholar activists, we are committed to the idea that research should be to generate robust and significant new knowledge about and enhance or deepen understanding of a particular topic, or social issue across society as a whole. We therefore want our research project to be a means of generating wider dialogue and debate about the potential of region-building and regional cooperation to be harnessed in support of anti-poverty objectives. Collaboration with researchers, practitioners and policy workers of all kinds is crucial in consolidating and extending the reach of this project.

Please get in touch with us if you think your work or your research might fit in with these PRARI objectives. We would be delighted to hear from you.

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