Addressing Systemic Challenges to Social Inclusion in Health Care Initiatives of the Private Sector

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…….Latin America remains the most unequal region in the world, presenting significant challenges to overall regional development. A number of groups— among them the urban and rural poor (33.1 percent of the population), indigenous populations, Afro-Latinos, and women—continue to lack access to critical pillars of development, including quality health care services….

"…..This report presents the findings and conclusions of Americas Society's (AS) Ford Foundation-funded research on health care carried out under the AS Social Inclusion Program.

The goal of this paper is to draw attention to a sample of new practices that increase access to quality health care for marginalized populations and spur businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations to commit more to address this issue.

The focus is on Colombia and Mexico, where ongoing national efforts have significantly increased health care access for those traditionally left out of the health care system. By the end of 2010, Seguro Popular had reached 42 million of Mexico's 50 million previously uninsured, and by 2011, the subsidized regime of Colombia's Ley 100 was providing health insurance to 11 million people who otherwise would have had no such insurance.

Through in-country research and a roundtable meeting, Americas Society, leveraging its relationship with sister organization Council of the Americas (COA), looked at select cases in which the private sector is expanding access to care in each country. This report does not evaluate individual programs but rather presents a variety of health care initiatives that all have the same goal: providing care for those that otherwise would not have access to it. It is essential that we consider these cases and the lessons learned in the larger regional context.

Recommendations include:

•Greater utilization of information and communications technology, through eHealth and mHealth initiatives, can expand access to quality care, reduce inefficiencies and cut costs.

•A regional clearinghouse of for-profit models that serve marginalized populations can be an effective strategy for consolidating efforts.

•Regular dialogue between health ministries or local departments and the private sector is necessary to harmonize health care delivery efforts…."

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