Health Investments Master Plans (HIMP)

with a Network Approach

How to improve the impact and sustainability of health projects?

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According to estimates from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the public health network of Latin American and the Caribbean has an investment deficit of over $150 billion. This deficit corresponds to the uncovered financial needs to guarantee the adequate functioning of infrastructure assets and medical equipment.

On top of this estimate, there is an **increasing demand for health services due to the rapid increase in the prevalence of non-communicable chronic diseases, to technological innovation and due to the promised progress towards universal coverage.** This scenario is further complicated by a context of budget restrictions and insufficient planning tools to prioritize investments.

Only a few countries in the region have Health Investments Master Plans (HIMP). The absence of HIMPs jeopardizes the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of health projects[1].

The IADB has created a Reference guide for the preparation of Investment Master Plans with a Network Approach to support countries in the region in their investment planning and prioritization processes[2].

The Integrated Health Services Networks (RISS) approach[3] consists on responding to health demand taking into account all facilities in a given territory, optimizing their operations and complementing the operation of hospitals with that of the first level of care (primary care).

HIMPs with a Network Approach are an instrument which aims to build a short, medium and long term roadmap based on an approach combining a demand analysis and the current and projected service supply, optimizing resource use and implementing network management measures to increase the effectiveness of investment to build sustainable health responses.

The methodological guide's proposal includes a series of phases:

1. Diagnosis of the health demand, the resource supply (personnel, infrastructure, equipment, financial resources and ICT), service production and network management.
2. Demand projection (generally 10 years onwards) and an optimized estimation of the services and resources gap.
3. Plan formulation and prioritization:
   a. Investments;
   b. Human resources;
   c. Information technologies.
4. Network management.

The guide's methodology is flexible both in terms of its thematic and its territorial scope; this has allowed its use in different countries to identify investment priorities and/or to design networks.

In **Argentina**, for example, in 2023, the Health Ministry and the National Direction of Physical Resources coordinated the design of an HIMP with the provinces. This allowed the country to identify and strengthen care networks, as well as plan its budget and the investments to be executed. Additionally, it allowed the technical prioritization of physical resources, resulting in a Federal Investment Plan, the setting up of a health intelligence room to build information governance mechanisms, and it fostered the training of managers with a network approach and the survey of health facilities.

In **Guatemala**, the *Guatemala Network Study* conducted in 2018 allowed the identification of health gaps (morbidity and mortality by department), coverage gaps (primary health care and hospitals), human resource, infrastructure and equipment gaps, as well as gaps in its network's operation. **The results were used to design an investment program to face the most critical gaps, both relative to investments and management.**

In **Peru**, in 2015, an analysis of the Lima and Callao hospital network was conducted. The annalysis measured the care gaps and the investment priorities to define the scope of a broad hospital investment plan.

In **Chile**, this approach was applied in 2022, **contributing to design the Neurosurgical and Cardiosurgical care networks,** suggesting complexity levels and derivation paths (care lines) depending on the territories.

Summing up, creating Health Investment Master Plans can help optimize the impact and increase the sustainability of health infrastructure projects.

In the short term, framing an HIMP allows to execute physical infrastructure projects to recover the capacity to respond to health demands. In the medium and long term, it can help to design the actions to respond to new challenges linked to modernization processes and to the system's sustainability.

Thus, a health system with limited financial capacity can optimize its financial and operative resources by planning and executing a HIMP.

REFERENCES

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[3] OPS. (2023). "Redes Integradas de Servicios de Salud".

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