

# *Health: Priority for the Bolivian government*



Health: Priority for the Bolivian government

By María Josefina Arce

The government of President Luis Arce has been making a difference, after the coup d'état of 2019 that set back the advances registered in Bolivia under the mandate of MAS, Movimiento al Socialismo, in essential branches such as health.

In the last few hours the population received the good news that thanks to the political will of the new administration, bone marrow transplants for children with cancer can now be performed in the South American nation, free of charge.

The Children's Hospital in La Paz already has the equipment and professionals in the area to perform this surgery, which previously meant an expense of one hundred thousand dollars for families who had to travel abroad.

The government has been working to strengthen the SUS, the Unified Health System, implemented under the previous MAS mandate to provide universal and free assistance to citizens who do not have insurance and which was totally abandoned by the coup authorities.

In fact, the self-proclaimed president Jeanine Áñez and her cabinet had a very bad management in all areas and especially in the face of the world health emergency caused by COVID 19. The harsh confinement and repression against Bolivians who were unprotected and without state help characterized the confrontation with the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

Bolivia experienced difficult times. Cases and deaths were unstoppable. People died in the streets and mass graves were set up. Health personnel had no medicines or means to protect themselves. Indigenous peoples were left totally unprotected.

There were even corruption scandals such as the overpriced purchase of artificial respirators for patients with the virus, which did not meet the necessary parameters for use in intensive care wards.

Since his inauguration in November 2020, Arce and his executive were fully committed to provide an adequate response to the pandemic. The fight against the disease has been based on three pillars: mass diagnosis to provide rapid care to the sick and prevent its spread, coordination with regional governments to adopt measures according to the behavior of the disease in the different territories, and vaccination.

In this way, the acquisition of diagnostic tests and the purchase of vaccines was managed for the protection of all Bolivians, especially the most vulnerable and health personnel.

The state has made large expenditures to provide quality and inclusive assistance.

Thus, close contacts have been maintained with indigenous communities. Not only have they been provided with drugs and other medical supplies, but they have also been listened to in order to understand their specific needs.

The state budget since Arce became president includes funds to complete the construction of hospitals started under the previous MAS mandate and that the coup paralyzed.

The current Bolivian government has made the health and welfare of its citizens a priority, and is working to ensure that no one is left without the necessary medical care.

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