

Children and Adolescents, austerity policies and the commitments of the 2030 Agenda

The issue of *Revista Ciência e Saúde Coletiva* is dedicated to children and adolescents, representing an opportunity to reflect on the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)^{1,2}. The United Nations established policies and goals that prioritize this population group and are expressed in various SDGs: 1 (No poverty); 2 (Zero hunger); 3 (Good health and well-being for people); 4 (Quality education); 5 (Gender Equality); 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation); 8 (Decent work and economic growth); 11 (Sustainable cities and communities); and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)^{1,2}.

The SDGs provide a historic opportunity to enhance the rights and well-being of every child and adolescent, especially the most underprivileged, by ensuring a healthy world for today's girls and boys and for future generations^{1,2}.

Brazil has been characterized by affirmative actions for children and adolescents, among them the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) based on the Doctrine of Comprehensive Protection for children and adolescents, acknowledging them as subjects with rights, whereby adults have the duty to ensure these rights.

In the last decade, some programs have been fundamental for enhancement of the health of this population group, such as: *Rede Cegonha* (Stork Network); National School Food Program (PNAE) with guarantee of access to healthy food for poor children in preschool; expansion of the Family Health Strategy; *Mais Médicos* (More Doctors); *Bolsa Família*; Health in School Program; articulating actions of the primary care and education teams; the VIVA Youth Plan; tackling homicides against black youths; structuring the Violence and Accidents Surveillance (VIVA), with mandatory reporting of domestic violence and child protection networks. These actions have resulted in improvements in indicators such as reducing child malnutrition, attaining the millennium goals of reduction of child mortality by two-thirds (2015), tackling child labor and broadening early childhood education. However, in recent years, indicators have fallen back due to the economic/political crisis, fiscal austerity measures and cuts in social protection programs³. The increase in unemployment and poverty impacted children immediately with the return of immuno-preventable diseases, such as measles and increased infant mortality (2016), after a 15-year uninterrupted cycle of decline.

It is considered that childhood and adolescence are stages of development where everything that happens in their environment, especially in their families and the surroundings in which they live, directly affects the most vulnerable children. Therefore, childhood suffers directly from the impact of austerity policies³.

Besides that, immense challenges persist, such as the high burden of morbidity and mortality from external causes, especially deaths from aggression. It is highlighted that more than half of the 56,000 homicides occur among young people aged 15-29 years, of which 77% are black.

In this sense, the discussion on the legal age for criminal responsibility and the attacks on the statute of disarmament directly affect the future of children and adolescents, who must be shielded with protective education measures, access to justice, peace and non-violence. Greater access to arms will cause an increase in violent deaths, especially among the most vulnerable, namely youths, the impoverished and black people.

In this way, SDGs represent an opportunity for the country to prioritize public policies to broaden the rights of children and adolescents, invest in equity policies and reduce differences between rich and poor. For the future of children and adolescents, eradicating extreme poverty, hunger and racism, and offering quality health and education to promote peaceful and inclusive societies by 2030 is a priority. These are commitments for the present and for the future^{1,2}.

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References

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