



Revista Cuidarte

ISSN: 2216-0973

ISSN: 2346-3414

Programa de Enfermería, Facultad de Ciencias de la
Salud, Universidad de Santander UDES

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Revista Cuidarte, vol. 10, núm. 3, e810, 2019, Septiembre-Diciembre

Programa de Enfermería, Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad de Santander UDES

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15649/cuidarte.v10i3.810>

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Globalization in a social inequality context: how to ensure global health?

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Historic

Receipt date:

18 de marzo de 2019

Approval date:

15 de mayo de 2019

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We can approach globalization from the perspective of impacts or defects, abundance and wealth or poverty and misery, where the rich increase their fortune while the poor drown in their penuries. These are some thoughts that crossed the minds of students and teachers of the doctorate in nursing at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil, after reading the “Globalization, Poverty and Health” article, the critical analysis of the film “Encounter with Milton Santos or the Global World Seen from This Side” and the debate on the book “Globalization and Social Sciences”¹⁻³.

Globalization is a process of economic, social and cultural development that has bloomed in the past two or three decades and entails the strengthening of social relations that connect distant countries, fostering the rapid dissemination of local events that can be accessed by anyone around the world. However, many authors and organizations continue to criticize this process. Almost-irreversible inequalities have settled in developing countries, making us reflect on the extent to which economic, political, and cultural discrepancies among human beings are acceptable in the light of the ethical and moral concerns¹⁻³.

The global government is led by a few stakeholders that own a thick slice of the economy; this contributes to widen the economic gap among nations. Some examples of social struggles against globalization that have arisen in Bolivia, Africa, Argentina, Brazil and other countries evidence the capitalist world that has spread among peoples and society. Witnessing the daily struggle of families to make a living and put food on the table shows a reflection of the magnitude of inequalities that have become harmful to individuals, mainly, in the context of poverty and the fight against hunger¹⁻².

How to cite this article: Alvim AL. Globalização no contexto da desigualdade social: como garantir a saúde global? Rev Cuid. 2019; 10(3): e810. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15649/cuidarte.v10i3.810>



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In this train of thought, the need to transform the world and reduce inequalities encouraged a bold action plan that included 17 sustainable development goals, 169 objectives and 241 indicators, all of which are interconnected and interdependent. This new agenda proposed by the General Assembly of the United Nations must be implemented by all countries until 2030, thus becoming a global priority. The first objective, *ending poverty in all its forms everywhere*, confirms the social and health inequalities and makes us reflect on the real-life situation that generates this multidimensional condition and the origin of its concept. Let us pause and reflect on this: We still have 836 million people living in extreme poverty. What planet do we want our neighbors to inherit? What are human rights in a multinational,

globalized and capitalist world?⁴.

Other objectives related to sustainable development are related to ensuring a healthy life, inclusive and equalitarian education, achieving gender equality (valuing women), ensuring basic sanitation and energy services for the population, promoting economic growth and reducing inequalities, among others (Figure 1). All of these priorities were identified in the film *Encounter with Milton Santos* and in Buss¹ text stating that globalization has impoverished countries and spread poverty, exclusion and economic and social inequalities. In fact, these factors have a negative effect on resilient systems, impacting the health of individuals, families and the community^{4,5}.



Figure 1. 17 (seventeen) sustainable development goals.

Source: United Nations, 2018.

Moreover, wars and conflicts caused by economic disputes, emerging and reemerging diseases, the growth of illicit drugs around the world, individuals weakened by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS, and maternal fatalities foster critical thinking about the true meaning of the Federal Brazilian Constitution in the face of globalization. Consequently, it is essential to quote Art. 196: “Health is everyone’s right and a State’s duty, ensuring social and economic poli-

cies [...] for promotion, protection and recovery”. Is this a utopia or a reality?^{1,3,6}.

Another example is social inequality attributed to multinational companies such as *Boeing 777* and *Nike*; these companies invoice large amounts in sales around the world and pay the lowest amount possible to employees that make their products. Their “crazy” social segregation also stands out; employees who do not eat are separated from

those who not sleep, as the company fears a strike by those who do not eat². While there is a fight for fair globalization, health equality, world peace and the reduction of inequalities, the fact is that conflicts are increasing pathologically, as in the last decades, and the economy will remain in the hands of a few players driven by their own interests; meanwhile the poor will continue making merely enough for a basic living. Is it possible to offer health and wellness in this context?^{1-3,5,7}

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