

## **Health insurance for children and mothers slows child mortality in Bolivia**

An estimated 2.5 million children in Bolivia live in poverty. It lies at the root of the sickness and malnutrition that cause the vast majority of deaths among children under five. Many live miles from the nearest health services and can't afford the cost of care.

"In the countryside there are no doctors," says Eulalia de Noe, who has walked several miles to bring her four children to see a doctor at the nearest hospital in San Asunción de Guarayos. "There is not even a health centre, so we have to come here to be able to have a check-up."



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Eulalia de Noe and her children have to walk several miles to reach the nearest health centre.

### **Unrestricted care**

Ms. de Noe's baby needs routine vaccinations and all four children are suffering from diarrhoea, which is responsible for more than a third of infant deaths in Bolivia. But thanks to a new approach to juvenile health care, supported by UNICEF, she will not have to pay for their treatment.

The new and extended government insurance policy also enables doctors to offer unrestricted care to children under five and help their mothers during pregnancy.

"Our maternal mortality rate is very low – almost zero," says Dr. Edil Toledo from the Hospital de San Asunción de Guarayos. "That's happened in the four years since I've been here and it's mainly due to the application of insurance."

**By Jane O'Brien** UNICEF 14 September 2006