WHO Health Inequality Monitoring

at global and national levels

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Global Health Observatory (GHO) data

Health Equity Monitor

Inequality in reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) interventions:
A composite coverage index of RMNCH interventions captures both the provision and use of key RMNCH interventions. In a quarter of study countries, there was at least a 30 percentage point gap in composite coverage index between the richest and poorest quintiles.

View interactive graph
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- Database
- Country profiles
- Interactive visuals
State of Inequality in reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health: interactive visualization of health data
Equity-oriented global monitoring of health services coverage in the context of universal health coverage

Manuscript prepared for PLOS Medicine UHC collection (September 2014)

Abstract: Monitoring inequalities in health is fundamental to the equitable and progressive realization of universal health coverage (UHC). A successful approach to global inequality monitoring must be intuitive enough for widespread adoption, yet maintain technical credibility. This article discusses methodological considerations for equity-oriented monitoring of UHC, and proposes recommendations for monitoring and target setting. Inequality is multidimensional, such that the extent of inequality may vary considerably across different dimensions such as economic status, education, sex, and urban/rural residence. Hence, global monitoring should include complementary dimensions of inequality (such as economic status and urban/rural residence) as well as sex. For a given dimension of inequality, subgroups for monitoring must be formulated taking into consideration applicability of the criteria across countries and subgroup heterogeneity. For economic-related inequality, we recommend forming subgroups as quintiles, and for urban/rural inequality we recommend a binary categorization. Inequality spans populations, thus appropriate approaches to monitoring should be based on comparisons between two subgroups (gap approach) or across multiple subgroups (whole spectrum approach). When measuring inequality absolute and relative measures should be reported together, along with disaggregated data inequality should be reported alongside the national average. We recommend targets based on proportional reductions in absolute inequality across populations. Building capacity for health inequality monitoring is timely, relevant, and important. The development of high-quality health information systems, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting practices that are linked to review and evaluation cycles across health systems, will enable effective global and national health inequality monitoring. These actions will support equity-oriented progressive realization of UHC.

This paper is part of the PLOS Universal Health Coverage Collection.

Background

In recent years the monitoring of health inequalities—defined as the observed health differences between subgroups of a population—has gathered momentum at the global level [1-4]. Monitoring health inequalities can be considered a platform for assessing health equity—a normative concept referring to avoidable and unjust health differences between subgroups of a population, stemming from a form of social disadvantage [5]. Global monitoring of within-country health inequalities (i.e., cross-country comparisons of within-country inequalities based on standardized indicators and measurement approaches) is an important practice in the promotion of health equity, as it facilitates comparisons across borders and over time, and enables countries to perform benchmarking and learn from the experiences of one another [6]. Concurrent national-level inequality monitoring is valuable beyond its contribution to global monitoring to take into account context-specific factors and priorities.

As the end-date of the Millennium Development Goals draws nearer, plans for the post-2015 global development framework include a concentrated focus on universal health coverage (UHC) [7], a movement that is a longstanding and growing priority for the World Health Organization and its member states [8], and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly [9].

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Advocacy booklet on Health Inequality Monitoring and accompanying video clips

MONITORING HEALTH INEQUALITY
An essential step for achieving health equity

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS
Health Inequality Monitoring: with a special focus on low- and middle-income countries

Select health indicators

Obtain data

Implement changes

Report results

Analyse data
PowerPoint lectures on Health Inequality Monitoring

Lecture 1: Introduction
- ppt, 574kb
  Presents background information about monitoring and health inequality overview of health inequality monitoring in the context of low- and mid-income countries.

Lecture 2: Health indicators and equity stratifiers
- ppt, 522kb
  Highlights considerations that underlie the selection of health indicators stratifiers.

Lecture 3: Data sources
- ppt, 878kb
  Outlines types of data sources and their strengths, limitations, and area improvement; introduces data source mapping.

Lecture 4: Simple measures of health inequality
- ppt, 885kb
  Discusses the application and limitations of simple measures of inequality and ratio.

Lecture 5: Complex measures of health inequality
- ppt, 1.82Mb
  Describes complex measures of inequality, and their application to health monitoring: slope index of inequality, concentration index, absolute me; Theil index, population attributable risk.

Lecture 6: Reporting inequalities I
- ppt, 1.19Mb
  Introduces the guiding principles to effectively report the results of inequality monitoring.

Lecture 7: Reporting inequalities II
- ppt, 1.42Mb
  Demonstrates additional considerations and practices for reporting health inequalities.

Lecture 8: Cumulative example
- ppt, 1.61Mb
  Provides an example of health inequality monitoring in the Philippines, concepts in lectures 1-7.
eLearning module on Health Inequality Monitoring

Health Inequality Monitoring

Health Inequality Monitoring: eLearning Module

Everyone Everywhere Always

Enter
Health inequality monitoring training workshops

REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING OF TRAIRES WORKSHOP ON HEALTH EQUITY MONITORING
28 April - 2 May 2014, Manila, Philippines
Health Equity Assessment Toolkit (HEAT)

HEAT enables the exploration and comparison of within-country health inequalities across countries.
Future directions

- Expand the Health Equity Monitor to other topics beyond RMNCH
- Continue capacity building in countries
- Establish a global network of health reach institutes
MONITORING HEALTH DETERMINANTS WITH AN EQUITY FOCUS

Promoting health equity: WHO health inequality monitoring at global and national levels

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Background: Health equity is a priority in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and other major health initiatives. The World Health Organization (WHO) has a history of promoting actions to achieve equity in health, including efforts to encourage the practice of health inequality monitoring. Health inequality monitoring systems use disaggregated data to identify disadvantaged subgroups within populations and inform equity-oriented health policies, programs, and practices.

Objective: This paper provides an overview of a number of recent and current WHO initiatives related to health inequality monitoring at the global and/or national level.

Design: We outline the scope, content, and intended uses/application of the following: Health Equity Monitor database and theme page; State of inequality: reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health report; Handbook on health inequality monitoring: with a focus on low- and middle-income countries; Health inequality monitoring eLearning module; Monitoring health inequality: an essential step for achieving health equity advocacy booklet and accompanying video series; and capacity building workshops conducted in WHO Member States and Regions.

Conclusions: The paper concludes by considering how the work of the WHO can be expanded upon to promote the establishment of sustainable and robust inequality monitoring systems across a variety of health topics.