

Meeting Notes – 1st November 2025

Mapping Inequalities in Health Service Coverage in Africa

Introduction

The study focuses on understanding how access to essential health services differs across African countries and regions. It highlights that while Africa has made progress in expanding health services, many people, especially in rural or poor areas, still struggle to access basic care. It emphasizes that achieving Universal Health Coverage requires identifying where and why these service gaps exist.

Methodology

- The researchers used household survey data from 2000 to 2020 across multiple African countries.
- They examined 14 essential health indicators, including immunization, antenatal care, family planning and child treatment services.
- Using geospatial statistical models, they created maps showing variations in health service coverage both between and within countries. These maps helped visualize areas with the weakest access to care and how coverage changed over time.

Key findings

- Large inequalities exist in health service coverage within and between African countries.
- Urban areas consistently have better coverage than rural ones.
- North and Southern Africa generally perform better, while Central and West Africa lag behind.
- Poorer households and less educated women are less likely to access essential services.
- Though progress has been made since 2000, improvement has been uneven, leaving some communities far behind.

Implications

- Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Africa requires equity-focused strategies, not just overall national progress.
- Governments should focus on underserved populations and regions that are often left behind.
- Data-driven planning should be used to identify gaps and guide resource allocation.
- Resources and healthcare workers need to be distributed fairly across all regions.
- Without tackling these internal inequalities, progress toward UHC will remain incomplete and uneven.

Call to action

- Use of localized, high-resolution data to identify and prioritize neglected areas.
- Stronger primary health systems to reach marginalized populations.
- Fair allocation of health workers and funding across regions.
- Policies that combine health, education, and poverty reduction, since these factors are closely linked.

Future research gap

- Gathering more recent and frequent data to monitor change in real time.
- Understanding the causes behind the inequalities, including cultural and infrastructural barriers.
- Evaluating which interventions and policies most effectively reduce disparities.
- Strengthening data-sharing and collaboration across countries to support regional solutions.

Blessings,

Mercy W. KURIA