

# Child Health Inequality and Opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa

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## **Abstract:**

We estimate child health inequality and the part of inequality caused by measurable factors (circumstances), such as family background, the mother socio-demographic and anthropometric factors, household structure, household facilities and the region of residence. For 33 Sub-Saharan countries and using comparable household surveys, we perform this analysis for children below 5 years old, paying special attention to inequality differences by cohorts: from 0-1 up to 4-5 years old. Our measure of child health is the standardized height-for-age z-score corrected by the age (in months) and gender. We show that child health inequality is systematically lesser for the cohort of 4-5 years old than for the younger cohorts, which is consistent with the existence of catch-up. However, the aforementioned set of circumstances is impeding a further reduction in child health inequality. Indeed, health inequality caused by these factors (its ratio with respect to total inequality) has risen along the child age distribution in more than 80% of the countries analyzed. We do not find evidences that these results are caused by a mortality-selection bias. Instead, we find that family background, followed by the household facilities and the place of residence of the child, contribute to explaining this evolution of child health inequality in SSA along the age distribution.

**Keywords:** Child health inequality, family background, age distribution, Sub-Saharan Africa.

**JEL-Code:** I14, I15, O10, P52