

Ex-ante Inequality of Opportunity in Child Malnutrition: New Evidence from Ten Developing Countries in Asia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the inequality of opportunity in child malnutrition in ten developing countries in Asia, where a high proportion of children still remain vulnerable to food insecurity. This study takes account of multidimensional aspects of household and parental socio-economic status, and partitions children into distinct types through a data-driven clustering method. This is followed by a comparison of the malnutrition rates between types. Next, we decompose the observed disparity into the factors that are associated with the between-type disparity in malnutrition rates through a non-linear decomposition method. The results indicate that in all 10 countries, significant between-type disparities are found. We find the largest difference in Pakistan as 21.7 percentage points and the smallest difference in Maldives as 5.9 percentage points. In five of the ten countries, the difference in household affluence explains the largest part of the observed between-type disparity. All the results suggest that priority should be given to protecting children from marginalised households in order to mitigate the inequality in child health.