

Social Determinants of Health and Inequities and Inequalities in Healthcare

Dr Satish Kumar UNICEF for Tamil Nadu & Kerala, sakumar@unicef.org

Abstract

This paper focuses on the Social Determinants of inequities in Health Care in India. It is argued that the unequal distribution of health care services is not a natural phenomenon but a result of poor social policies, unfair economic arrangements and bad politics. Socio cultural determinants of inequities in health care system are discussed based on the experiences from Rajasthan (based on Second National Family Health Survey 1998-99 and studies from Rajasthan). The differences between the health outcomes for general population and Scheduled Tribes who live in remote inaccessible areas are presented in the paper. There is a marked difference in the indicators of access to information about health care facilities, physical access and utilization of health care between general and ST population and it varies across economic status of the population.

While highlighting the Challenges to Equitable Healthcare this paper has also concrete suggestions for addressing these challenges. Certain good practices in Rajasthan are cited in the paper as examples of programmatic interventions to demonstrate how changes in policy focus can help reducing inequalities in health care.