**Title:** Assessing socioeconomic inequalities in maternal healthcare over time; evidence from four African countries

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**Abstract**

Though most African countries saw some improvements in maternal health outcomes, most of these countries did not meet the MDG 5 target of 190 deaths per 100,000 live births. Ensuring universal access to health care is very instrumental in improving health outcomes. To be able to meet the SDG target of 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, there must be equity and equality is access to and utilisation of maternal health care services. This can be possible by eliminating socioeconomic differences in access to maternal health care. This paper seeks to document the degree, extent and evolution of socioeconomic inequalities in maternal health outcomes in 5 African countries; Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. The paper examines 3 maternal health outcomes – timing of first antenatal visit, number of antenatal visit and delivery by skilled attendant. The paper has 2 main objectives; (i) estimate the degree and trend of socioeconomic related inequalities in access and use of maternal health care and (ii) asses the correlates of the socioeconomic related inequalities in maternal health services and their contribution to the level of observed inequalities. The study adopted the Wagstaff and Errygers measures to measure the bivariate rank indices. These indices do not explain the contribution of socioeconomic characteristics in the observed differences. A generalised regression decomposition technique is therefore adopted to assess the sources of socioeconomic inequalities in health. The paper uses different rounds of Demographic and Health Surveys in the various countries. These surveys provide extensive information on access and use of various maternal healthcare services from nationally representative sample of women of reproductive ages (15 – 49)