**Title: Socioeconomic differentials of child stunting in rural and urban areas of Zambia**

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**Thesis abstract**

Child stunting remains one of the biggest public health concerns in Zambia and other low and middle income countries (LMICs). A formidable challenge faced in improving child health outcomes in LMICs are the persistent socioeconomic and residential disparities. Despite overall decline in the prevalence of child stunting over the years, children residing in rural areas and less-privileged households continue to fall behind their peers from urban areas and wealthier households in Zambia and other LMICs. Specifically, most studies have shown that children residing in rural areas and less privileged households have a higher risk and burden of stunted growth in SSA. However, simple rural-urban comparisons in child stunting can potentially mask wealth differentials that exist within rural and urban areas. Specifically most cross country analysis have shown that wealth differentials are higher in urban areas compared to rural areas; and also higher than urban-rural odds of stunting among under-fives.

Using data from the 2013/14 Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS), this study assess differences in the relationship between socioeconomic status and child stunting in urban and rural areas of Zambia. Secondly, the study examines the effect of socioeconomic status and residence type in predicting child stunting prevalence in Zambia. To achieve these, the thesis used chi-square tests and multiple logistic regression analysis. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first single country analysis primarily focus on Zambia that has disaggregated the effect of predictors of child stunting by residence type. It is anticipated that the results of this dissertation will broaden the knowledge base on wealth and residential differentials in child nutritional outcomes in Africa; and thereby provide useful information to policymakers and technocrats in Zambia.

Overall, the findings indicate that under-fives residing in urban areas and poorer households have a higher risk of getting stunted compared to their peers in rural and wealthier households. However, the relationship between child stunting and SES (household wealth) slightly differs after segregating by residence type. In both rural and urban areas, there is a consistently inverse relationship between the odds of stunted growth among under-fives and SES (household wealth). Furthermore these findings indicate that socioeconomic differentials are wider in rural areas compared to urban areas; and much wider than the overall rural-urban odds ratios in Zambia. These findings could possibly as a result of socioeconomic inequalities in child stunting that are higher in rural areas than urban areas. However, there is need for further research to examine the causes of differentials in child stunting that may exist in rural and urban locations of Zambia.

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