

## Improving measurement of equity in family planning

*Justification/Rationale:* The FP2020 partnership recognized 10 rights and empowerment principles of family planning; of these, one was focused on equity and non-discrimination. This focus on equity will remain critical to the vision of the FP2030 partnership. Inequities in health are avoidable, unnecessary, and unjust (Whitehead, 1992). According to a recent High Impact Practices [publication](#), “Equity for family planning implies that all groups have the same access to information and services, and to all available methods of contraception, and that they are able to make decisions about their fertility and their use of contraception and act on those decisions.”

*What is the measurement challenge/issue?* To understand if inequities exist in access to family planning information and services, researchers can assess three widely accepted dimensions of inequities – economic, social, and environmental. Economic inequities are related to wealth status (and can also impact social inequities). Social inequities are related to sex, age, education, marital status, race/ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, employment, intra-household bargaining, etc. Finally, environmental inequities are related to geographic location, humanitarian setting, etc.

Reviewing inequities in a single country at a point in time is feasible through existing survey sources for certain indicators (e.g., method information index, modern contraceptive use, attitudes about family planning, receiving family planning information through family, radio, tv, health provider, or community health worker, etc.) and for certain elements of the three dimensions (e.g., wealth, geographic location, sex, age, or education). However, available data have limitations related to (1) equity dimensions and outcome indicators considered and (2) comparability across settings.

Data on equity dimensions are limited; certain socio-demographic characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, disability, and intra-household access to income/assets are not consistently measured across surveys and not all current survey sources include data for never-married women, an important social inequity that should be examined.

Outcome measures are limited too; while current surveys do measure access to family planning information, they do not adequately capture data on if women have **access** to services (including different methods).

Comparing wealth inequities in family planning over time and across countries can be complicated because the standard wealth index in surveys measures relative differences in the economic status of households in that country at the time of the survey only. Data during crisis periods, e.g. from humanitarian settings, seldom exist.

*What actions can be taken to advance measurement in this area?* Despite these challenges it is crucial that the family planning community make measurement improvements that will help decision-makers diagnose inequities in country-specific contexts and compare across different countries. The FP2030 partnership should consider several of the following as they continue to work to improve equity-focused indicators:

Related to data collection:

1. Are there questions existing surveys lack that would better capture inequities in family planning, related to capturing inequities in access, as well as inequities in domains that are currently not captured? Can projects such as PMA or individual studies pilot new questions?
2. Can other data sources such as HMIS data be used to assess inequities?

Related to data use:

1. How can countries best monitor inequity in family planning? Are there certain elements (e.g. age, wealth, etc.) in each dimension (e.g. economic, social, geographic) that should be consistently measured for family planning?
2. How should progress in reducing inequities be measured? Should modeling be considered to provide annual estimates for equity-focused indicators, since surveys are only periodically available?
3. How can targets for reducing inequities be set?

The family planning community has already made considerable gains in socializing the importance of understanding inequities in family planning programs; it has also tried to overcome measurement challenges through proposing standard family planning indicators (e.g. family planning information) through an equity lens. Even with these gains, the community needs to harmonize on which aspects of equity are critical to annually monitor for family planning programs and identify the best way forward for improving measurement.